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VIRTUE REFORMED

Rereading Jonathan Edwards's Ethics

BY

STEPHEN A. WILSON



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For Jackie

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ABBREVIATIONS

- WJE 1 *Freedom of the Will*. Edited by Paul Ramsey. Vol. 1 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1957.
- WJE 2 *Religious Affections*. Edited by John E. Smith. Vol. 2 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959.
- WJE 3 *Original Sin*. Edited by Clyde A. Holbrook. Vol. 3 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1979.
- WJE 4 *The Great Awakening*. Edited by C.C. Goen. Vol. 4 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1972.
- WJE 5 *Apocalyptic Writings*. Edited by Stephen J. Stein. Vol. 5 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1977.
- WJE 6 *Scientific and Philosophical Writings*. Edited by Wallace E. Anderson. Vol. 6 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1980.
- WJE 7 *The Life of David Brainerd*. Edited by Norman Pettit. Vol. 7 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985.
- WJE 8 *Ethical Writings*. Edited by Paul Ramsey. Vol. 8 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- WJE 9 *A History of the Work of Redemption*. Edited by John F. Wilson. Vol. 9 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989.
- WJE 10 *Sermons and Discourses 1720–1723*. Edited by Wilson H. Kimnach. Vol. 10 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.
- WJE 11 *Typological Writings*. Edited by Wallace E. Anderson and Mason I. Lowance, Jr., with David H. Watters. Vol. 11 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1993.

- WJE 12 *Ecclesiastical Writings*. Edited by David D. Hall. Vol. 12 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1992.
- WJE 13 *The 'Miscellanies,' 'a'-500*. Edited by Thomas A. Shafer. Vol. 13 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.
- WJE 14 *Sermons and Discourses 1723-1729*. Edited by Kenneth P. Minikema, Vol. 14 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997.
- WJE 15 *Notes On Scripture*. Edited by Stephen J. Stein. Vol. 15, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press 1998.
- WJE 16 *Letters and Personal Writings*. Edited by George S. Claghorn. Vol. 16 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.
- WJE 17 *Sermons and Discourses, 1730-1733*. Edited by Mark Valeri. Vol. 17 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999.
- WJE 18 *The 'Miscellanies,' 501-832*. Edited by Ava Chamberlain. Vol. 18 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000.
- WJE 19 *Sermons and Discourses, 1734-1738*. Edited by M.X. Lesser. Vol. 19, of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001.
- WJE 20 *The 'Miscellanies,' 833-1152*. Edited by Amy Plantinga Pauw. Vol. 20 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002.
- WJE 21 *Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith*. Edited by Sang Hyun Lee. Vol. 21 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- WJE 22 *Sermons and Discourses, 1739-1742*. Edited by Harry S. Stout and Nathan O. Hatch, with Kyle P. Farley. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003.
- WJE 23 *The 'Miscellanies' 1153-1360*. Edited by Douglas A. Sweeney. Vol. 23, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004.

PREFACE

Virtue and Salvation: Centrifugal Forces

Jonathan Edwards begins his first major mature work, the *Treatise Concerning Religious Affections*, by correlating ‘the distinguishing qualifications of those that are in favor with God, and entitled to his eternal rewards’ with ‘the distinguishing notes of ... virtue and holiness.’¹ Contrary to Calvin and the Westminster Confession, Edwards here emphasizes not the remaining flaws in the good works of the saints but the ‘sweetness’ of divine things those who love God passionately feel and the affections that can be said to be pointed out by ‘the lamblike, dovelike spirit and temper of Jesus Christ.’² This same insistence is reflected in writings from the early part of the corpus to the late. The very first entry of the private notebooks he kept throughout his adult life is a halcyon eulogy to what is ‘sweet, pleasant, charming, lovely, amiable, delightful, serene, calm and still ...’ in the nature of holiness.³ Christian holiness is ‘above all the heathen virtues’ in its humility, peacefulness, and in its ‘loving all things but sin.’⁴ One of the final entries of these ‘Miscellanies’ is less rhapsodic than scholastic in tone, but no less strongly affirms in reference to the obligation in Jer. 22:16 to care about the poor and needy, ‘the language of the New Testament concerning faith ... in effect ... [to] say from time to time concerning such moral duties, Was not this to believe in Christ?’⁵ ‘We are there taught,’ Edwards continues citing the letter of James, ‘that God will own no other faith as true but that which works by love and shows itself in deeds of charity (Jas. 1:27 and 2:14–26).’⁶

¹ *WJE* 2, 84.

² Forgiveness and mercy are also put forward in the *Religious Affections* as part of the cluster of character traits making up this saintly profile (*WJE* 2, 344, 346, 355).

³ ‘Miscellanies’ No. ‘a,’ *WJE* 13, 163.

⁴ ‘Miscellanies’ No. ‘a,’ *WJE* 13, 163–164.

⁵ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1354, *WJE* 23, 522.

⁶ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1354, *WJE* 23, 522.

Three general points of reference for this correlation of virtue with salvation stand out from the Edwardsean corpus. First, Edwards regards Scripture as identifying certain traits possessed by the saints that others lack.⁷ ‘... [A] sensible effect of it remains upon them’ he writes, ‘... something remarkable in their disposition and frame, which if we take knowledge of, and trace to its cause, we shall find it is because they have been with Jesus (Acts 4:13).’⁸ This remarkable something is the virtue of Christian love or charity.⁹ If what the Spirit communicates is God’s nature, Edwards muses, then ‘[i]t would be strange if Christians should not be of the same temper and spirit that Christ is of; when they are his flesh and his bone, yea are one spirit (I Cor. 6:17) ...’¹⁰ A second highly grounded point of reference in Edwards’s correlation of virtue with salvation is that this unique piety cannot be said to be of a spiritual nature somehow apart from the moral.¹¹ As Edwards remarked in a mid-career sermon on the perseverance of the saints, ‘[t]he connexion between a wicked life and damnation is so certain, that if a man lives a wicked life, it proves that all his supposed experiences are nothing.’¹² The saints are virtuous. A third point of reference is equally incontestable: the spiritual and moral qualities the saints uniquely possess are to some extent made manifest in practice.¹³ The twelfth and most substantially developed ‘sign’ of truly religious affections Edwards identified in the *Religious Affections*

⁷ Edwards cites I John 2: 12–14, 21 and I Pet. 2: 5, 9 as indicating how the apostles spoke of the church as a community visibly set apart from the common run of person by the virtue of its members (*WJE* 12, 247; see also *WJE* 12, 217, 493).

⁸ *WJE* 2, 344; see also *WJE* 2, 118, 437.

⁹ This is why young children are not ordinarily proper candidates for full church membership. They lack the kind of virtue that is a probable sign of, or a reasonable likelihood of being connected with, the virtue distinctive of saints. On Edwards’s theology of childhood, see Catherine A. Breckus, ‘Children of Wrath, Children of Grace: Jonathan Edwards and the Puritan Culture of Children,’ in *Perspectives on Children in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bungee (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 300–328.

¹⁰ *WJE* 2, 347.

¹¹ *WJE* 12, 189.

¹² ‘The Character of Paul an Example to Christians,’ in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, A.M., with an essay of his genius and writings by Henry Rogers: and a memoir by Sereno E. Dwight*, revised and corrected by Edward Hickman (London: Ball, Arnold and co., 1840), Vol. 2, 857. More will be said about this text in Chapter 5.

¹³ *WJE* 12, 206–207, 290–292. See also Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1966), 129–143.

is Christian practice diligently and persistently pursued as the chief 'business' of life.¹⁴

Of crucial significance within this still to be captured Edwardsean ethic is the theological qualification of the substantive view of virtue outlined above. Characteristically ready-to-hand for the delimiting task has been the term 'works righteousness.' Whatever moral traits Edwards may have singled out as uniquely possessed by 'saints,' the concept of 'works righteousness' has for many interpreters stipulated that faith must be more primordial and perceptible still.¹⁵ It is a complex term but perhaps its range of meanings may be said to cluster around the following four theological *loci*. A first *locus* is the view that Christian righteousness is primarily 'imputed.' This view presents saved persons as possessing little or no god-pleasing qualities 'inherent' within themselves; they please God primarily because of inclusion under the auspices of Christ's righteousness. While Edwards may have rhetorically employed the concept of perfection to chasten the unrepentant, the pre-understanding of his Reformed 'orthodoxy' has served for many to deny the possibility that he could have held saints to a rarified standard of consistent supererogation. It is because human beings cannot be *this* good that they must be cloaked in Christ's righteousness for salvation. A more substantive notion of 'indwelling' or 'infusion' has been subject to concerns about monism, merging with God's essence as an unacceptable consequence of rising to a godlike virtue.¹⁶ A second *locus*

¹⁴ *WJE* 2, 383.

¹⁵ *WJE* 2, 346, 355.

¹⁶ Paul Ramsey has intricately documented the great extent to which Jonathan Edwards's nineteenth-century descendent cum literary executor, Tryon Edwards, muted the rhetoric of infusion in the original sermons making up *Charity and Its Fruits* ('Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 8, 59 n.5, 105–110). Tryon Edwards's concerns about the 'Protestant' orthodoxy of such rhetoric continue in some form to the present day. Cherry worries about its relationship to a theologically objectionable unity with God cum 'mysticism' (*The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 86–87). Ramsey, as one might expect from his powerful advocacy of the interpretation that Edwards held to an inherent rather than an imputed conception of righteousness, criticizes Cherry's contrary view (*WJE* 8, 85). Even Ramsey, however, feels at least somewhat uncomfortable with taking the inherent line too far. After a brief excursus on Francis Turretin's balancing of inherent and imputed righteousness and an invocation of Calvin's concerns about works righteousness, Ramsey concludes his treatment of the issue by observing that while '... no Puritan ever believed that final truth had broken forth from the Scriptures in the writings of that man of God in Geneva ...' but yet '... no one can read Calvin, or the foregoing summary of his views, on the two forms of righteousness without noting the deep family resemblance between them and Edwards' views' (Ramsey 'Appendix IV: Infused Virtues in Edwardsean and Calvinistic Context,'

of ‘works righteousness’ is the view that assurance of salvation comes primarily through experiences and/or perceptions commensurate with faith. To have it come through virtue would, after all, be to violate some of the classic Reformation assessments that moral perfection places an insurmountable burden on the *viator*. ‘Piety of heart,’ under such a stipulation, is not an overarching term encompassing the totality of the virtues possessed by ‘saints’ but rather the foundation and *sine qua non* sign of election out of which the various saintly virtues flow as only partial manifestations. A third *locus* of ‘works righteousness’ is the view that the offer of grace is characterized by a unilateral testament. God *bestows* grace upon human beings in a manner precluding any subsequent reciprocation. A fourth *locus* of the term ‘works righteousness’ is a sharp separation of the visible and invisible churches. Because the nature of salvation is Jesus’ perfect righteousness imputed to the elect and because the extent of saintly virtue can only be imperfect, so too must virtue’s expression be sporadic and open to substantive failure.¹⁷ In this view, the church is not presumed to contain within it only saved persons. Rather than a perfectionist ecclesiology akin to Anabaptism—in which all members in good standing are presumed to be among the saints—discipline is meant merely to maintain order within the church. It is not meant to demarcate between saved and unsaved.

But if it is clear that Edwards thought that the general relationship between virtue and salvation is an important question not only for a theological elite but for ‘... every individual person to be well resolved in ...’ it is less clear how he thought it should be answered in its particulars.¹⁸ At least, this is the view I take in this book: to approach what Edwards meant even by such a basic term as *virtue* as an open question inspiring genuine wonder. Given the enormous weight of Edwards in internecine debates among manifold Protestants and manifold Protestant debates with modernity, it is actually quite difficult to do.

WJE 8, 750). Michael J. McClymond dispels some of the prejudices against Neoplatonism in Edwards interpretation with a very helpful comparison with Gregory Palamas (‘Salvation as Divinization: Jonathan Edwards, Gregory Palamas and the Theological Uses of Neoplatonism,’ in *Jonathan Edwards Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp [Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003], 139–160).

¹⁷ In the view of Judith M. Gundry Volf, the threatening of destruction in Paul ‘... presents an obstacle to Christian sanctification, not to final salvation’ (*Paul and Perseverance: Staying In and Falling Away* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1990], 97). They instead embody a hortatory strategy Paul used for showing that the Christian community still could and did care about morality (*ibid.*, 131–154).

¹⁸ WJE 2, 84.

Edwards as Theologian and Philosopher: Centrifugal Historiographies

To 'reunite Edwards the theologian and Edwards the philosopher' was set as a task by Douglas Elwood in 1960.¹⁹ Most scholars have now recognized Paul Ramsey's basic point that 'it is a grave error ... to separate Edwards' philosophy from his theology, or his moral philosophy from his theological ethics.'²⁰ The centrality of the forgoing ideas in the Edwardsean corpus means that I am hardly the first to suggest that Edwards had a high degree of virtue in mind as part of the justification-sanctification complex. The concept of virtue enjoys a prominent place in several extant studies of Edwards's ethics. Such might be expected given that Edwards is principally known as an ethicist for the second portion of his *Two Dissertations*. In this work, as William K. Frankena noted in his introduction to a widely read edition of *The Nature of True Virtue*, '... he meant to propound an ethical theory which was consistent with Calvinism, but he meant to establish it on empirical and rational grounds, even if he does refer to Scripture once or twice.'²¹ This move is also natural given, as J.B. Schneewind has argued, that however 'slow' and 'unintended' they may have been, the various attempts made during the eighteenth century 'to show that human beings are capable of providing fully adequate moral guidance and control for themselves' nevertheless reflected 'the most marked general tendency of the period.'²²

So Edwards has been substantively and successfully connected to the moral sense tradition. More will be said on this subject in the review of recent literature in the following Introduction. But while such stud-

¹⁹ Douglas J. Elwood, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 3.

²⁰ Paul Ramsey, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 8, 11; William C. Spohn, 'Union and Consent with the Great Whole: Jonathan Edwards and the Nature of True Virtue,' in *The Annual*, ed Alan B. Anderson (Society of Christian Ethics, 1984), 19–32; idem, 'Sovereign Beauty: Jonathan Edwards and the Nature of True Virtue,' *Theological Studies* 42 (Sept. 1981): 394–421; Michael J. McClymond, *Encounters With God: An Approach to the Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 50–64; Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought in its British Context* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published by the University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1981), 176–181, 301.

²¹ *The Nature of True Virtue*, with a foreword by William K. Frankena (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1960), vi.

²² J.B. Schneewind, 'Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Ethics,' in *A History of Western Ethics*, ed. Lawrence C. Becker and Charlotte B. Becker (New York: Garland, 1992), 80.

ies might include sporadic reference to classic texts from the history of Christian theology, they tend to privilege the Anglo-American context incommensurately with Edwards's diverse intellectual background and overemphasize that narrative of moral philosophy in which it gains autonomy from theology.²³ Broadly 'Calvinist' studies embodying one or more of the 'works righteousness' loci noted above, on the other hand, have retained too general and too modern notions of Protestantism to be able to sort out the precise connection between the Reformed tradition and 'the moral sense.' The two motifs are thus perpetuated, hegemonic both in their incontestableness and in the impetus they carry for mutual exclusion. The kinds of in-between questions neither approach answers are the most pressing for setting out Edwards's ethical position with precision. Ought the formal aesthetics Calvinist faith shares with moral sense benevolence be governed by an overarching 'forensicness,' for instance, or is 'consent to Being' conceptually wedded to actual virtue? What does it mean to 'participate in the divine nature' in a manner that forcefully separates regenerate from unregenerate sensibilities if not the kind of visibly different behavior Edwards did not do much to qualify in his ecclesiastical writings?²⁴ Does the concept of habit Edwards uses to describe how 'saints' might be identified to themselves (if not to third-party observers) break beyond the conceptual limits of what is forensic about virtue? Must 'true virtue' always be habitually expressed to be said to exist? If so, what is the threshold of consistent practice that constitutes such a criterion?

The incompleteness of the task of setting out the full intellectual history wherein Edwards constructed his position still leaves open a great many questions central to identifying what it was with any precision. The bits and pieces assembled above provided a basis for rehearsing significant correlations to well-known Edwardsean themes. But at the same time they encompass trajectories of thought that move beyond the most obvious and well-worn Reformed staples, trajectories Edwards may well have grafted onto his own position because of their easily fit-

²³ Robert Merrihew Adams makes a point similar to the latter in his 'Reading the Silences, Questioning the Terms: A Response to the Focus on Eighteenth-Century Ethics,' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 28.2 (Summer 2000): 281–284.

²⁴ I refer mostly to Edwards's two published treatises on the subject (see *WJE* 12). Of course, Edwards did write scores of sermons on church membership, baptism, and the Lord's Supper. For a fascinating and helpful study of these mostly unpublished sources see William C. Danaher, Jr., 'By Sensible Signs Represented: Jonathan Edwards' Sermons on the Lord's Supper,' *Pro Ecclesia* 8, No. 3 (Summer 1998): 269–289.

ting proximate parts, knowingly or unknowingly leaving non-Reformed odds and ends to intrigue and perplex later interpreters.

What makes setting out of the options even more complex is that the influences on Edwards cannot be limited to the Reformed tradition. George Marsden notes in regard to the Jeremiah Dummer collection of books that made up the lion's share of the 1718 library of the new Yale college that a significant amount of Anglican as well as dissenting authors were included.²⁵ Also included were some works of general philosophical, scientific and theological interest (including some Roman Catholic works). The possibility that he may have on occasion departed from strict Calvinist orthodoxy was suggested early in the twentieth-century revival of interest in Edwards by Thomas Schafer.²⁶ More recently, Anri Morimoto and Gerald McDermott have made substantive cases that Edwards may well have incorporated strands of Roman Catholicism and Deism even into his soteriology.²⁷ In the chapters that follow I will include, as do Norman Fiering and William Danaher, Jr., the ethical writings of Nicolas Malebranche among the wide range of sources Edwards consulted in constructing his own position. Edwards's ethical position resonates not only with (1) 'the moral sense' and (2) 'Calvinism,' but (3) such 'latitudinarian' divines as the Cambridge Platonists, and (4) Protestant scholasticism both before and after Calvin.²⁸ Whether they are merely independent co-developments or more causally connected influences, neither can (5) those overlaps between Puritanism and both Separatism and Anabaptism be exempted from the force of the English Reformation on Edwards's

²⁵ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 139–140. Edwards spent some early formative years among these books.

²⁶ Thomas A. Schafer, 'Jonathan Edwards and Justification by Faith,' *Church History* 20 (1951): 55–67.

²⁷ Anri Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); Gerald McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion, and Non-Christian Faiths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

²⁸ Richard A. Muller, *The Unaccommodated Calvin: Studies in the Foundation of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); idem, 'The Persistence of Christian Aristotelianism,' *Trinity Journal*, 19 (1998): 81–96; idem, 'Scholasticism Protestant and Catholic: Francis Turretin on the Object and Principles of Theology,' *Church History*, 55, No. 2 (June 1986): 193–205; John P. Donnelly, S.J., *Calvinism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976); idem, 'Calvinist Thomism,' *Viator* 7 (1976): 441–445; 'Italian influences on the Development of Calvinist Scholasticism,' *Sixteenth Century Journal*, VII, No. 1 (April 1976): 81–101; Paul Ramsey, 'Appendix IV: Infused Virtues in Edwardsean and Calvinist Context,' *WJE* 8, 739–750.

mind.²⁹ A wide range of interpretative possibilities is created through alternative combinations of the constitutive elements of Edwards's moral philosophy and his theological ethics. Each of these traditions are, after all, not infrangible but made up of subcomponents which themselves shift over time. Given the complexity and theological weightiness of these questions, one can strongly identify with Stanley Hauerwas who nearly thirty years ago indicated his resistance to using Edwards as a source for ethics because of a lack of resolution in the historical literature on the meaning and legacy of his work.³⁰

If the diverse ethical options peculiar to the multiple traditions in which Edwards participated are not transparent or obvious, it would seem that church historians rather than philosophers or theologians would be the party to entrust with identifying the particular ethical position he chose as his own. The secondary literature on Edwards's ethics certainly does not have a diverse enough appreciation of the full range of his sources to address these historical problems adequately. We must indeed remember that Edwards was a polemical author. His vast corpus was not intentionally written as a systematic whole but as a series of responses to problems he faced in his immediate intellectual and social environment. Accordingly, whether one regards it as a theological or a philosophical problem, understanding what Edwards thought about ethics rapidly becomes the problem of determining the proper historical context in which to situate it. As I seek in the following chapters to (i) bring Edwards's major mature treatises into a novel relationship with one another and (ii) reread his ethical position by means of a much more diverse range of texts, I will accordingly turn to the history of philosophy and theology. Whenever Edwards drew on the moral sense theorists, the Cambridge Platonists, the non-Reformed influences on the Reformed tradition as well as the interaction of Puritan, Separatist, and Anabaptist ideas in the Anglo-American context, aspects of the 'logic of virtue' delimited by both first generation Reformers and twentieth-century assumptions about the nature of Calvinist 'orthodoxy' could manifest themselves with greater frequency and volume.

²⁹ Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology 1570–1625* (Oxford [U.K.]: Oxford University Press, 1988); Stephen A. Wilson 'A Reassessment of the Reformation Context of Jonathan Edwards's Puritan Heritage,' *International Seminar on the History of the Atlantic World, 1500–1800*, Working Paper, No. 00–21, Harvard University.

³⁰ Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life: A Study in Theological Ethics* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 179.

Of the two outcomes possible when waves are superimposed on one other, I will most often suppose that Edwards's conception of virtue was amplified by corroborating influences countering the 'works righteousness' motif rather than neutralized by its sometime co-presence in his Reformed and non-Reformed heritage. To document this amplification, however, the student of Edwards's ethics must reconstitute his position from the interstices between disconnected bodies of literature on artificially disconnected intellectual influences.

Even after one gains a historico-theological purchase on the usage of the term *virtue*, however, there is simply no way of setting out Edwards's position as a whole without getting into the nitty-gritty of philosophical exegesis and argumentation. Even if one's taxonomy of as pervasive a tradition in his heritage as 'Calvinism' were exhaustive, even if Edwards could be shown to be the heir of Protestant scholasticism's adaptation of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, the perfectionistic ecclesiology of proto-pietists and Separatists, and the 'new metaphysics of Being' promulgated both by Malebranche and certain British moral sense theorists, it still waits upon rigorous philosophical analysis whether, for instance, he employed a Thomist-Aristotelian sense of habit or what Sang Hyun Lee has called a 'dispositional ontology'.³¹ Even if it could

³¹ Some Reformed theologians have sought to place Edwards in the Reformation's encounter with scholasticism. Anri Morimoto's treatment of François Turretin's participation in the *De auxiliis* controversy of the Counter-Reformation is a case in point. Morimoto's general observation that Protestant scholastics shared concepts and arguments with their Roman Catholic counterparts is highly refreshing and much to be applauded. And yet, a deep philosophical analysis of the spectrum of views between determinism and necessity is lacking in the supposition that Turretin's siding with the Thomists against the Molinists provides a foundation for Edwards's sympathy with a 'Catholic concern' in soteriology (Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation*, 50–54). Morimoto defines the "Catholic concern" of Edwards's soteriology' as a concern that 'God's absolute sovereignty ... does not demolish the relative independence and integrity of the reality thereby created' (*ibid.*, 61). A separate and further philosophical analysis is required, however, to answer whether the 'Thomist' response of supposing that the will is '... so moved by the Holy Spirit to the act of love that it must itself also produce it' encompasses a sufficiently robust freedom of the will to be worthy of the term, and subsequently, whether the association with 'Thomism' helps solve the 'problem' of balancing the monopoleuric and dipoleuric conceptions of the covenant (Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 2a2ae. 23, 2, reply, in *Summa theologiae*, Vol. 34, *Charity*, trans. R.J. Batten, O.P. [Oxford: Blackfriars; New York: McGraw-Hill; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1975], 13). For a more detailed analysis of Aquinas's position see John F. Wippel, 'Divine Knowledge, Divine Power and Human Freedom in Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent,' in *Divine Omniscience and Divine Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy: Islamic, Jewish and Christian Perspectives*, ed. Tamar Rodavsky (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985), 213–241; and William Lane Craig, *The Problem of Divine Fore-*

be established that Puritans thought the true church ultimately invisible within God's inscrutable will, one must still ask *to what extent* signs of election were necessary for full membership and/or admission to the Lord's Supper and *how* these signs were to be known? Is the complex spiritual epistemology of the practical syllogism to be governed institutionally by a rule of charity or are there more definitive rules to be applied?³² One of the ways Reformed 'epistemology' and 'pneumatology' were kept connected to ecclesiology, for instance, was with the concept of covenant. Were those who found themselves socially recognized by full church communion destined or promised to stay therein or were they kept there through God's immutable power or decree? Was the ultimate perseverance of the saints guaranteed by God in an unconditional covenant or were there conditions placed on human beings' 'autonomous' actions for maintaining right relation to God?

The countervailing forces of philosophy, history, and theology often loomed as a methodological Bermuda triangle in this respect. Navigating its mystifying, dangerous and unpopulated boundaries has been the most challenging and frustrating part of writing this book. My manual rudder, when the navigation systems provided by established fields of scholarship blinked out, has been a confidence that however much the contemporary professionalization of knowledge places persons who study the many dimensions of Edwards's ethics in separate departments and faculties, this was not the case in the seventeenth-century Reformed world upon which Edwards drew. Richard A. Muller describes not merely card-carrying scholastics like Voetius but even '[o]ther lesser-known professors and pastors' as having 'crossed what appear to us as disciplinary boundaries (but were not actually such in the seventeenth century) and conjoined a methodologically scholastic theology with biblical exegesis and piety.'³³ Edwards himself did not see ecclesiology as separate from ethics, virtue as separate from justification by faith, or the mechanisms of habituation as separate from the evi-

knowledge and Future Contingents from Aristotle to Suarez (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988). It should be noted that Morimoto gives a fuller treatment of *De auxiliis* controversy in 'The Seventeenth-Century Ecumenical Interchanges,' in *Christian Ethics in Ecumenical Context: Theology, Culture, and Politics in Dialogue*, ed. Chiba, Husberger and Ruiz (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 86–102.

³² On the subject of the 'rule of charity,' see Baird Tipson's excellent, 'Invisible Saints: The "Judgment of Charity" in the Early New England Churches,' *Church History* 44, No. 4 (December 1975): 460–471.

³³ Muller, *After Calvin*, 61.

dence of perseverance. He was certainly influenced by moral sense theory. But he was far from the more or less Anglican position attributed to him by some ethicists. He was thoroughly influenced by Calvinism. But he was not nearly as influenced by the ‘five points’ of the canons of the Synod of Dort as some theologians would have it. What has not been captured and what I hope to offer in this study is the precise manner in which Edwards could be both of these things because he was several others things besides.

INTRODUCTION

REREADING EDWARDS'S ETHICS

The Current State of Scholarship

I have benefited in many ways from the careful headway other scholars have made towards the integration of Reformed theology and Enlightenment moral philosophy I will venturing to pinpoint in Edwards. Conrad Cherry's 1966 study has continued to set a high standard of comprehensiveness in Edwards studies. His reappraisal of Edwards's theology comes as a response to studies such as Douglas J. Elwood's, which sought to counter history's unfair remembrance of Edwards as a 'thundering revivalist.'¹ His true stature, Elwood argued, is as a progressive figure who 'designed his theology to revitalize a decadent Calvinism' and who 'was concerned to ... make relevant the Hebrew-Christian concept of the majesty of God, which was challenged ... by both naturalistic and ultraconservative theology.'² Elwood fits well Cherry's assessment of interpreters who were still so 'uncomfortable with Edwards' Calvinism' that features of his thought were 'frequently searched out which "transcend" his Calvinism or which prefigure the post-Puritan era of American thought' to 'alleviate the pain of embarrassment.'³ Cherry also rightfully enhanced the historical accuracy of Edwards studies by unapologetically restoring its authentic connection with the Calvinist legacy. In part because it forcefully resists the artificial 'modernization' of Edwards, but also because it '... is central to the whole of his intellectual endeavor and germane to his major works,' Cherry opts to approach Edwards's theology through the lens of his conception of 'faith.'⁴ Cherry insists that Edwards, careful to stipulate that '[i]t is only through the mediation of Christ that men's works are

¹ Douglas J. Elwood, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1960), 4.

² Elwood, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 5, 7.

³ Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor/Doubleday, 1966), 2.

⁴ Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 7.

in any sense “good,”” maintained continuities with an intercessory conception of Christ’s atonement.⁵ Cherry further seeks to maintain that aspect of the traditional Reformed doctrine of faith pertaining to the hopefulness in God’s promise;⁶ this is often cited as needful in light of the continued force of original sin to mar the works of the elect and the inability of even perfect works to merit salvation.

Sang Hyun Lee’s more recent model of Edwards’s metaphysics has had an appreciable influence on broader assessments of Edwards’s thought. With the 2000 republication of Lee’s initial book-length statement of his theory and his lengthy introduction to the definitive edition of Edwards’s *Treatise on Grace* and various supporting unpublished notebooks, we can expect to see that influence increase.⁷ At the heart of what Lee calls Edwards’s ‘dispositional’ view of reality or his ‘dispositional ontology’ is his specification that a habit or disposition is ‘... an active and ontologically abiding power that possesses a mode of realness even when it is not in exercise.’⁸ The theological issues at stake in this philosophy of habit run to the very heart of the Reformed tradition. Building on Lee’s interpretation of Edwards’s dispositional ontology, Anri Morimoto argues that the disposition to act on faith ‘... may not always coincide with the time of infusion, [such that] ... when there is no occasion to exercise itself in faith, the infused disposition remains there unexercised.’⁹ ‘The inner disposition,’ Gerald McDermott insists following this line of interpretation, ‘not any particular acts and exercises, is the only essential prerequisite to salvation.’¹⁰

⁵ Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 139–140.

⁶ Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 81, 157–158.

⁷ Gerald McDermott’s *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion and Non-Christian Faiths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000) is an impressive culling together of Edwards’s attitudes towards world religions from intermittent comments in unpublished notebooks. Despite making a career out of battling Enlightenment religion, McDermott argues that Edwards ‘believed there was true revelation from God in non-Christian religions’ and ‘... like some of the better-known thinkers of the Enlightenment, he was mesmerized by non-European religions ...’ (McDermott, 3, 4). McDermott’s book is designed to show that even if ‘Edwards never reached this explicit conclusion’ it remains plausible to suppose that ‘his own theology lays the groundwork’ for a soteriology in which ‘the heathen can be saints before they come to Christ’ (McDermott, 137).

⁸ Sang Hyun Lee, *The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, expanded edition (Princeton, NJ: Princeton Univ. Press, 2000), 7.

⁹ Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 32.

¹⁰ Gerald McDermott, ‘A Possibility of Reconciliation: Jonathan Edwards and the Salvation of Non-Christians,’ in *Edwards in Our Time: Jonathan Edwards and the Shaping*

This 'seed' of grace existing within an elect soul without current manifestation is sometimes understood to be an effect of the hidden will of God. The less one requires manifest faith and/or demonstrable faithfulness, the more hidden and nascent this seed of grace can be. If there is a standard answer to this question in the classical Reformed spectrum it is that such a state of affairs is most applicable to the newly regenerate. George Marsden, for instance, writes that '[y]oung children might have saving grace, even if they did not live long enough for it to come to fruition in identifiable signs of conversion.'¹¹ The confidence and expectation for the mature person of faith is that sanctification will eventually follow upon justification because the two are part of the same gift of grace (and the body of Christ cannot be severed). But in this lag time, there is a conceptual possibility that a person can be justified without having full or even appreciable sanctification. Even if it only has the status of 'may be realized' or 'would *certainly* be realized if certain conditions are met' a habit of grace can, in theory, be said to be real.¹² The 'dispositional' nature of reality also encompasses a trope of the common Neoplatonist and trinitarian idea that the divine nature is the apogee of realness or being which human beings achieve only to the extent that they become like God. These two concepts come together in the sense that God is always trying to expand the reality of the universe, through the creation of further re-emanators of the divine nature.¹³

Although it was ostensibly conceived as a background for several of Edwards's shorter and unpublished writings, Lee's introduction to the volume of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* series on the trinity, grace and faith, clearly means to bring the theory of 'dispositional ontology' to bear comprehensively on some of the most central themes in Edwards's thought. Without parting company with Cherry's demphasis of human persons serving as natural causes for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit,¹⁴ Lee identifies Edwards as having devised a way to 'maintain in his doctrine of grace the human reality of regeneration as well as the absolute primacy of God in that regeneration.'¹⁵ In so

of *American Religion*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee and Allen C. Guelzo (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 185.

¹¹ George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 27.

¹² Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, expanded edition, 44; italics original.

¹³ Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, expanded edition, 184.

¹⁴ Lee, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 21, 59.

¹⁵ Lee, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 21, 46.

doing, Lee believes he has articulated a way in which Edwards can be a full champion of the Reformed staples of justification by faith and imputed righteousness as well as give faith and ethics a foundation as free human acts.¹⁶ The locus of Lee's account, which will be discussed in greater detail in subsequent chapters, is that the Holy Spirit acts 'after the manner' of a human disposition while still acting fully in the manner of a divine person of the trinity.¹⁷

Cherry and Lee have each forwarded our understanding of multiple aspects of Edwards's thought. As my discussion unfolds, however, it will become clear that I nevertheless take issue with the manner in which both of their approaches to Edwards's Calvinist heritage diminish his robust conception of virtue by foregrounding faith and its hiddenness, respectively. What ethics can be generated from Cherry's analysis is a thin layer sandwiched between generous applications of an apology as to why 'Edwards' difference from the earliest Reformers in approach and emphasis' does not constitute 'a difference in substance' as well.¹⁸ Without challenging the validity of Morimoto's use of Lee's concept of disposition to suggest how Edwards may be used as a theological resource for understanding the salvation of infants and non-Christians or questioning the resonance Lee finds between it and certain modern philosophical debates, e.g., realism v. idealism and the thought of Charles Sanders Pierce,¹⁹ it should be highlighted that both depart considerably from any standard Aristotelian meaning of habit (and I will connect Edwards with the latter). Lee is right to point out that habits have an existence in Aristotle even when they are not being exercised;²⁰ the character trait of inordinate anger still has a reality within a person even when that person is being uncharacteristically kind. But habits cannot have a reality that exists before *any* exercise of the disposition putatively making up the habit. The entry on habit in an influential encyclopedia Edwards used, for example, cites Aristotle and 'the Schoolmen' as authoritative sources for this fairly straightforward sense of the term.²¹ As I hope to make clear, Edwards's Reformed credentials

¹⁶ Lee, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 21, 52.

¹⁷ Lee, 'Editor's introduction,' *WJE* 21, 56.

¹⁸ Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 78.

¹⁹ Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation*, 33–35, 64–66, 162; Lee, *Philosophical Theology*, expanded edition, 16, 36n, 44–45, 65–66.

²⁰ Lee, *The Philosophical Theology*, expanded edition, 18–19, 45–46.

²¹ Ephraim Chambers, *Cyclopædia: or an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences*. (London, 1728), 1: 198.

are far from being incompatible with the latter.²² What Lee gives with one hand toward the end of retrieving a substantive conception of freedom, he almost entirely takes away with other.²³ Lee's formulation of Edwards's ethics is that in rejecting the integrity of human causes in a Christian Aristotelian conception of habit vis-à-vis increased grace, he is not entitled to what Aquinas and others who hold views like it believe comes with it, e.g., a human freedom that is maintained despite God's operative grace.

Roland Delattre's *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards* is the earliest of five contemporary works on Edwards to substantively take up his ethics. Delattre very productively draws out the depth and nuances of the aesthetic component in Edwards's thought. He considers to the greatest degree extant in the secondary literature, for instance, that it is impossible to see moral perfections like justice in God without finding beauty in them.²⁴ But there is also a troubling sense in which privileging God's beauty over God's moral perfections separates the beautiful from the moral in Edwards as well.²⁵ It creates, for instance, the possibility of a greater disjoint between virtue and beauty than seems compatible with Edwards's sense that the elect person's virtue is a participation in God. To say that virtue is 'lovely' because of the sensitivity to beauty it encompasses and the beauty it expresses is to make virtue desirable for something other than itself. Delattre recognizes the deleterious consequences of emphasizing beauty too much to the expense of morality.²⁶ His aim, and it is a laudable one executed successfully, is to highlight Edwards's aesthetics because of its ability to '... lead us to those dimensions of his thought most peculiarly his.'²⁷ When the above caveats are registered, the remaining distortions are minor. What critical edge there is to this

²² While I therefore agree with Stephen R. Holmes's critique on this point that Lee goes astray because he 'pays great attention to ... Edwards's text, but little to his context,' but disagree that 'the Reformed Orthodox tradition from which Edwards learnt his theology was not especially interested in the idea of habit' ('Does Jonathan Edwards Use a Dispositional Ontology? A Response to Sang Hyun Lee,' in *Jonathan Edwards Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp [Aldershot [U.K.] and Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003], 100, 101).

²³ Lee, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 21, 48, 74.

²⁴ Roland Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 128.

²⁵ Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility*, 71, 77, 117, 134.

²⁶ Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility*, 79, 93.

²⁷ Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility*, vii.

comment is to highlight more what Delattre's isolation of the beauty motif leaves undone. The concepts of beauty and sensibility do not fully encompass the entirety of composite philosophical issues making up Edwards's ethics.²⁸

Clyde A. Holbrook is also interested in aesthetics but attempts to offer thereby a more comprehensive treatment of Edwards's ethics. More than Delattre, Holbrook is concerned, for instance, with Edwards's 'call to human effort.'²⁹ One of the obstacles to the success of Holbrook's efforts, however, is the highly general nature of the theological motifs in which Edwards is situated historically. Whereas Elwood chose Calvinism and Neoplatonism—determinate traditions one can trace with at least a moderate degree of specificity—Holbrook cast Edwards's thought in terms of a tension between 'theological objectivism' and 'theological subjectivism.' The former, an affirmation of 'the absolute primacy of deity, metaphysically, morally, and spiritually' is more difficult to pin down because Holbrook stipulates it as 'at root a profound conviction, rather than a dogma, or the conclusion of argument.'³⁰ The latter '... is a pattern of thought and conviction which, without denying the reality of God, puts to the foreground as the focus of human concern the human subject, his inner feelings, his needs, hopes, and values.'³¹ As Holbrook's discussion progresses, however, it becomes clear that it is the classic debate between 'intellectualists' and 'voluntarists' about the relationship of morality to God he is addressing. Holbrook's point that Edwards rejects the 'utilitarianism' of disconnecting happiness from the 'objective' ground of Being is not incorrect. 'Happiness is ... not merely in subjective feelings unattached to the source and end of all creation.'³² But it also highlights the historical limitations of Holbrook's primary motif. While the intellectualist-voluntarist debate certainly plays into Edwards's philosophical heritage, making this the prime architectonic of his ethics overly straightens the Reformed tradition from which he drew. For instance, his observation

²⁸ Of particular importance to this study is that Delattre shows little interest in the mechanisms by which greater and greater degrees of virtue are infused by means of greater and greater depths of 'consent' to God's beauty, i.e., habituation. See, e.g., Delattre, 'The Theological Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: An Homage to Paul Ramsey,' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 19 (Fall 1991): 89–93.

²⁹ Clyde A. Holbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1973), 19.

³⁰ Holbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards*, 3.

³¹ Holbrook, 7.

³² Holbrook, 159.

that '... moral effects if treated ... as "proof" of the value of the Awakening, lose their status and fall off into the doctrine of justification by works' fails to appreciate the long and influential tradition of the Protestant scholastics that accepted and developed the practical syllogism.³³ We shall see that in several of the moral traditions by which Edwards was strongly influenced there is little worry about the happiness of virtue separating from the demands of obedience to God; they are one and the same thing. Indeed, the former is regarded as the best and necessary evidence of the latter.

The study of Edwards's ethics reached an unprecedented level of historical sophistication with Norman Fiering's two impressive books in 1981.³⁴ Most studies of Edwards's ethics, while they may include sporadic reference to range of classic texts from the history or Christian theology, remain top-heavy with twentieth-century sources e.g., Karl Barth or H. Richard Niebuhr, and the issues that animate them. Very general notions of Protestantism govern exposition; and Anglo-American thought—preeminently, Puritanism—is privileged. Fiering takes three steps forward in simultaneously providing a more detailed picture of Edwards's immediate intellectual context in the transatlantic republic of letters, of the history of moral philosophy in late sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries on the continent, and of the broad areas of interpenetration between Catholic and Protestant ethical sources.³⁵ Fiering connects Edwards with too many subtle permutations of too many religious and philosophical debates to summarize here. Most central is the shift in philosophical foundation of ethics from the tradition of scholastic commentary on Aristotle to a species of 'plain speaking' reflection on human experience akin to 'natural philosophy' and out

³³ Holbrook, 37.

³⁴ Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought in its British Context* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published by the University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1981); Norman Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published by the University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1981).

³⁵ Fiering goes so far as to suggest that 'there is almost no better reference work to which one can turn for enlightenment on seventeenth-century Puritan thinking than the *Summa Theologica* of Thomas Aquinas' (*Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 66). Fiering further notes that Theophilus Gale cites Aquinas most among scholastic philosophers in his highly influential (in New England) 'Augustinian' work, *The Court of the Gentiles* (ibid., 284). Paul Ramsey offers substantial comparison between Edwards and Aquinas ('Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 8, 32–33, 55–59, 81–82; 'Appendix III: Heaven is a Progressive State,' *WJE* 8, 721–723).

from under the broader heading of practical divinity to a discipline more or less autonomous from dogmatics.³⁶ Fiering dates this transition as crossing something of a threshold after 1680.³⁷ ‘Harvard,’ which Fiering productively casts as a microcosm of the instability of the ‘uneasy peace between the secular and the religious realms’ in the late middle ages and early renaissance, ‘could not make up its mind how to teach moral philosophy or whether to teach it at all as a subject separate from divinity.’³⁸

Few could find fault with the historical context Fiering provides students of Edwards. When it comes to Edwards’s own place in this history, however, certain reappraisals are necessary. Fiering is very clear when expositing Edwards that true virtue is sanctified charity,³⁹ needful of God’s primary causality for its origins, and fundamentally distinct from any common virtues (however close their resemblance might otherwise be).⁴⁰ Fiering also recognizes that ‘[t]he prominent place assumed by moral philosophy in the eighteenth century need not be viewed negatively as an apostasy from the true faith of an earlier age, or as a degeneration of exalted piety into mere moralism.’⁴¹ But when Fiering emerges from the detailed consideration of texts to a broader assessment of Edwards’s place in the history of moral philosophy, he unfortunately undervalues his own point that ‘... Edwards belongs properly in the company of Leibniz, Malebranche, and Pascal ... who ... philosophized freely, but did so *within* a dogmatic tradition.’⁴² One particularly prominent example is in his admirably contextualized and otherwise insightful characterization of Edwards’s view that the reprobate are responsible for not having the saving faith only God can give them. Highly muted in Fiering’s exposition of the argument is any sense of the peculiar responsibility Edwards assigns to not loving God *qua fons bonorum*. Even though lacking a divinely wrought conversion the reprobate agent cannot love God, the failure to do so is still tantamount to a hatred of the good.⁴³ This criticism must be made very carefully,

³⁶ Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*; idem, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought*, 3–10, 105–149.

³⁷ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought*, 4.

³⁸ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought*, 3–4.

³⁹ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought*, 166.

⁴⁰ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought*, 122, 140, 351, 356.

⁴¹ Fiering, *Moral Philosophy Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 301.

⁴² Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought*, 51; italics original.

⁴³ As Edwards notes when considering whether to admit the unregenerate to the Lord’s Supper, ‘there is no room for the distinction of a moral sincerity and gracious

for it is certainly the case that the strong parallels between Edwards's conception of a moral sensibility that can perceive God's beauty and the moral sense of secular philosophers have been largely ignored by historians of ethics.⁴⁴ Fiering's principal aim—and it is well executed—is to fit Edwards into a rich and accurate portrayal of the history of moral philosophy. But when his 'most lasting and developed writings' are described as 'contributions to the new moral philosophy' a disservice is done to Edwards as a religious thinker inheriting and offering solutions to philosophical problems created by and functioning within a religious context.⁴⁵

Paul Ramsey has provided a scholarly introduction and several appendices to the *Ethical Writings* volume of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* series.⁴⁶ Because of the extensive analysis, comprehensive scope, and unified interpretation offered by these remarks, I believe it makes sense to regard them as comprising the fourth of the major studies of Edwards's ethics. Among Ramsey's most substantive contributions to the secondary literature on the ethics is the breadth of Edwards's writings that are engaged.⁴⁷ Also dramatic is his breaking out of the antiquated Calvinist hegemony to argue that Edwards held a primarily infused, rather than a primarily imputed, conception of righteousness.⁴⁸ But most significant is the fact that Ramsey corrects the tendency of some ethicists to emphasize the rhetoric of the moral sense in *The Nature of True Virtue* disembodied from the religious ontology set up in its counterpart, *The End for Which God Created the World*.⁴⁹ He accomplishes this

sincerity in this case: a supreme respect of heart to God, or a supreme love to him, which is real, is but of one sort: it would be absurd, to talk of a morally sincere supreme love to God in those who really love dirt and dung more than him' (*WJE* 12, 211).

⁴⁴ Fiering, *Moral Philosophy Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 176–181. Two of the most prominent histories of modern moral philosophy do not discuss Edwards in any length; see J. B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Stephen Darwall, *The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought' 1640–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

⁴⁵ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 7.

⁴⁶ Ramsey, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 8, 1–121.

⁴⁷ It does not match, however, Cherry's comprehensiveness beyond the standard ethical corpus.

⁴⁸ Ramsey, 'Appendix IV: Infused Virtues in Edwardsean and Calvinist Context,' *WJE* 8, 739–750.

⁴⁹ Ramsey takes particular care to critique Fiering when he believes Fiering has de-emphasized the religiousness of Edwards's views. On the crucial relationship between the two dissertations see also, William C. Spohn, S.J., 'Sovereign Beauty: Jonathan Edwards and the Nature of True Virtue,' *Theological Studies* 42 (Sept. 1981): 394–421; and

primarily through his detailed attention to the manner in which ‘common morality ... both in its nature and its effects, greatly “resembles” and is “agreeable” to true virtue’⁵⁰ Familial loves, for instance, have partly the nature of natural affections but can also ‘arise from absolute or pure benevolence to God.’⁵¹

Ramsey exploits every legitimate argument in the *Two Dissertations* to emphasize the confluences of common morality and true virtue. But while Ramsey’s discussion is not without recognition of the limitations of this correlation,⁵² his emphasis on the ‘splendor of common morality’ has a distressing tendency to weaken the distinctiveness Christian charity at the heart of Edwards’s ethics.⁵³ His suggestion that “‘swapping places” ... is a type whereby we substitute ourselves in the stead of others as Jesus Christ stood in ours’ is indicative of this problem.⁵⁴ Putting ourselves in the place of another is not sufficient for true virtue because it cannot itself extend beyond symmetrical relations. Negative feelings human beings associate with being inconsistent with themselves can mirror many of the same reactions and actions stemming from true virtue.⁵⁵ Truly sanctified charity uniquely generates, for instance, a pity toward those whose misery in calamity extends beyond what they deserve in proportion to the perceived ill done by them to others. Only if we wish them to be harmed more than they harmed others would it violate our conscience and thus be an occasion for our natural pity to censure or moderate our affections.⁵⁶ Ironically, then, in order to insure that the religious component of true virtue is retained in discussions of Edwards’s ‘moral sense,’ Ramsey has made sanctified charity too ‘com-

idem, ‘Union and Consent with the Great Whole: Jonathan Edwards and the Nature of True Virtue,’ in *The Annual of the Society of Christian Ethics*, ed. Alan B. Anderson (Society of Christian Ethics, 1985), 19–32.

⁵⁰ Ramsey, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 8, 33.

⁵¹ Ramsey, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 8, 51.

⁵² Ramsey, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 8, 19–20, 23–24, 36.

⁵³ Ramsey, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 8, 33–53.

⁵⁴ Ramsey, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 8, 25–26.

⁵⁵ A fundamental component of Edwards’s synthetic project in the *Two Dissertations*—as Fiering puts it, ‘to give seventeenth-century Puritan pietism a respectable philosophical structure, which would make it rationally credible and more enduring than it could be without the aid of philosophy’—is to critique ‘sentimentalism’ (Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought*, 60). Fiering was right to suggest that however much he appropriated certain concepts from it, Edwards encountered moral sense philosophy as a something that ‘directly rivaled some of the basic tenets of Christian anthropology. It was, in effect, a Christian heresy’ (Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought*, 8).

⁵⁶ This example will be given more substantive attention in Chapter 1.

mon.⁵⁷ He fails to capture the full extent of Edwards's view that '... the grace or virtue of truly good men not only differs from the virtue of others in degree, but even in nature and kind.'⁵⁸ And in so doing, Ramsey has left the realm of capturing what Edwards thought about ethics for the a-historical task of 'de-anachronising' the strident perfectionism so distasteful to liberal Protestant sensibilities, Barthian neo-orthodoxy, and evangelical Christianity alike.⁵⁹

The increasing role of the 'Miscellanies' in the secondary literature and Lee's recent publications of some of Edwards's writings on the trinity make William J. Danaher's newly published *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards* important to mention as well.⁶⁰ This is particularly so for the theologians and Christian ethicists to whom it presents Edwards's trinitarian thought as a corrective for many missteps in their field.⁶¹ What potential it has for securing a wider audience lies in its genuinely innovative program of eschewing the predominance of both Calvinism and Enlightenment moral philosophy as interpretive tropes.⁶² To make good on this significant promise, however, Danaher must execute at least one of two very difficult tasks. He must show either that crucial spheres of Edwards's ethical thought are invisible without a trinitarian context or that incorrect assumptions about Edwards's ethical thought are irreparable without a trinitarian context. Without detracting from its success in the more restricted sense noted above, to my mind, Danaher's de-emphasizing of the intentional polemics of mature treatises vis-à-vis Puritanism in favor of largely earlier trinitarian statements lessen the book's stature as a comprehensive statement of Edwards's ethical position besides its four predecessors.⁶³ Of particular import is the complex nexus of ideas tagged by Danaher's

⁵⁷ Ramsey, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 8, 38, 49, 91.

⁵⁸ *WJE* 7, 523.

⁵⁹ H. Richard Niebuhr, 'The Anachronism of Jonathan Edwards,' *Christian Century* 113 (My 1 1996): 480–485.

⁶⁰ William J. Danaher, Jr., *The Trinitarian Ethics of Jonathan Edwards*, Columbia Series in Reformed Theology (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2004).

⁶¹ On Edwards's trinitarian thought, see also Amy Plantinga Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002).

⁶² Danaher discusses several major Enlightenment figures. But they are often presented as polemical sounding boards, placeholders for the modality of ethics Edwards wishes to replace in its entirety, rather than as sources embodying claims Edwards found legitimate and genuinely wished to incorporate into his revised Calvinism.

⁶³ Among the Puritan tropes I have in mind are such standards as covenantal thought, preparation for salvation, and secondary causality.

suggestion that the goodness of such human institutions as marriage and friendship is generated by the incarnation rather than being instantiated in the form of goodness itself.⁶⁴ The distinction looks at first blush to be a matter of theological nicety. But at issue is Edwards's precise historical relationship to Enlightenment moral philosophy and with it the crucial interpretive question of his characterization of the natural order. Danaher explicitly acknowledges that Edwards seeks to avoid fideism in several respects. But the conjoined force of several of Danaher's points creates an implicit hermeneutic that gives fideistic arguments a not insignificant scope. While philosophical authors outnumber theological ones in his contextualization of Edwards's major ethical treatises, Danaher's ultimate assessment is to reject 'autonomous' moral philosophy as a distortion of what Edwards really sought to achieve as well as half-irrelevant both for what theology as a *sui generis* discipline should do and Christianity as a *sui generis* worldview should profess. Danaher is right to raise the theological ante on the emphasis of Enlightenment themes in Delattre, Holbrook, Fiering, as well as on Ramsey downplaying the distinctiveness of Christian charity when compared to other human loves. But in bypassing the significant Puritan valuation of the created order and what E. Brooks Holifield has called the 'accommodation' to 'human finitude, sinfulness, and inability' in Puritan Calvinism, Danaher's unmediated appeal to Edwards's robust trinitarianism overplays its hand.⁶⁵ In the worthy aim of moderating the heretofore skewed proportion of Enlightenment philosophy and Calvinism with an infusion of theological contextualization, he overshoots the mark from the other side leaving Edwards's ethics with an emaciated naturalism.

The Need for a New Reading

Scholarship is no less than theology subject to traditions of orthodoxy, corrective revolutions, and the cyclical pendulum motion of all the dynamic phases in between. For a great many reasons having to do with these scholarly sea changes, it is an auspicious time for a reappraisal of Edwards's ethical position. For one thing, the increased pace

⁶⁴ Danaher, *The Trinitarian Ethics*, 99.

⁶⁵ E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Theology From the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 34–35.

of Yale's *Works of Jonathan Edwards* has now seen the publication not only of all the major treatises but representative portions of the many genres of unpublished writings that have been inaccessible to all but the most archivally-oriented Edwards scholars. The over twenty volumes that have come out to date each have substantial scholarly introductions which exposit, contextualize, and bring Edwards's writings into relationship with one another. A mountain of secondary literature, much of it written by those connected with the edition itself, continues to build up. The tercentenary of Edwards's birth in 2003, with its special conferences and many coincidentally timed manuscript publications, has summoned up a mood of more comprehensive assessment. Accordingly, a brief topography of the shifts in the scholarly landscape might prove helpful to assessing where I see my attempt to capture Edwards's adaptation of the philosophy of virtue in relation to divergent contemporary assessments.

The study of Edwards for confessional theological purposes is alive and well; and there continues to be a philosophical thrust to it. But I share George Marsden's assessment of Iain Murray's biography in connection with this literature, i.e., that it reflects a tradition that is 'honorable but uncritical.'⁶⁶ The lack of an account of Edwardsean virtue fully integrated with the full depth of Reformed ethics would not be so deleterious if those studies that do take the Reformed tradition as a starting point did not tend to regard what inklings they perceive of his robust conception of virtue as an embarrassment. It remains all too common for scholars to demonstrate how, even though it looks like Edwards did not stay within the bounds of Calvinist orthodoxy, he actually did so. Paul Helm seeks to defend Edwards from the opprobrium of departing from 'classical covenant theology' and of subsuming the supernatural within the ethical.⁶⁷ Iain Murray seeks to defend him against the 'Brownist' perfectionism in ecclesiology.⁶⁸ While John Ger-

⁶⁶ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, xvii.

⁶⁷ Paul Helm, 'Introduction,' *Treatise On Grace and Other Unpublished Writings* (Cambridge & London: James Clarke & Co, 1971), 9, 16. Helm notes that Edwards replied to John Erskine's suggestion of a congregation for him in Scotland after being dismissed from Northampton by saying that 'there would be "no difficulty" in subscribing to the substance of the Westminster Confession' (*The Works of Jonathan Edwards ... revised and corrected by Edward Hickman*, 10th edition [London: Henry G. Bohn, 1871], Vol. 1, p. clxiii; quoted in *Treatise on Grace*, ed. Helm, 14). It is interesting to note, however, that Edwards stipulates it is the substance, not the entirety, that he agrees to.

⁶⁸ Murray seeks to protect Edwards against this from no less staunch a believer in Edwardsean orthodoxy than Charles Hodge (Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New*

stner recognizes the significant Edwardsean invocation of participation in the divine nature when it comes to the nature of sanctification, when perseverance in holiness is discussed as a condition of salvation (e.g., Heb. 10:28–29, 38–39) Edwards’s views are protected from breaching the acceptable boundaries of justification by faith by characterizing perseverance mainly as the avoidance of apostasy (unbelief).⁶⁹

The close attention paid in many volumes to the literary, socio-cultural, biographical, and archival context of Edwards’s output (including handwriting analysis and the dating of ink samples) has helped to seize back the original texts from the hands of two centuries of unrestrained editors, some of whose embarrassment about the robustness of Edwardsean virtue was strong enough to outweigh what scruples they may have had about positively changing Edwards’s own language.⁷⁰ This has led to necessary fortification of the boundaries separating the historical and theological tasks in Edwards scholarship. During the 1990s the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* undertook an even more historically rigorous phase that rightly sought to correct the sometimes overweening generalizations of a past generation of more philosophically-oriented scholarship. Partly because of the importance rightfully granted these historical adjustments and partly because of larger forces in the academic study of religion, Edwards has increasingly become the

Biography [Carlisle, Penn: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987, 336]). Murray cites Hodge as believing Edwards to have failed to distinguish between professing to be a Christian and being godly in the judgment of the church (*ibid.*, 336; Hodge, *Systematic Theology* [London and Edinburgh: T. Nelson and Sons, 1872, Vol. 3, 569]).

⁶⁹ John Gerstner, ‘A “Commentary” on Hebrews,’ in *The Rational Biblical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Powhatan, Va.: Berea Publications; Orlando, Fla.: Ligonier Ministries, 1991), Vol. 1, 419–425, 370–377.

⁷⁰ Paul Ramsey has also documented the great extent to which Edwards’s nineteenth-century descendent and literary executor, Tryon Edwards, muted the rhetoric of infusion in the original sermons making up *Charity and Its Fruits* (‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 8, 59 n.5, 105–110) This concern continues in some form to the present day. Cherry worries about its relationship to a theologically objectionable unity with God *cum* ‘mysticism’ (Cherry, 86–87). George S. Claghorn notes of a draft of an unpublished letter to an unknown respondent to the *Religious Affections* that ‘[t]here is no reason to believe that Edwards was denying creation or holding to the neo-Platonic view of emanation’ (*WJE* 8, 632). Claghorn suggests that the letter represents a forceful response of Edwards to the misguided charge of pantheism or monism (*ibid.*, 631). It is interesting to note that Samuel Willard, whose massive seventeenth-century sermonic exposition of the Westminster Confession few have found lacking in Reformed orthodoxy, uses the term infusion without concern that it will be confused with the communication of God’s essence to the regenerate (*A Compleat Body of Divinity* [Boston: 1726; New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969], 72).

province of historians of American religion. While I would not want to displace the scholarly check this highly rigorous body of work has placed on interpreters of Edwards who theologize ahead of textual and historical facts, I nevertheless think it important to underscore the possible distortions that may also arise out of the increasing subjugation of the study of Edwards to debates within the study of American religious history. One debate particularly relevant to this book was recently noted by eighteenth-century philosophy scholar Knud Haakonssen: namely, the manner in which the '[s]tudy of the Enlightenment has ... been intimately connected with methodological debates about the relationship between the history of ideas and intellectual history—the former conceived as analysis of the intellectual content of ideas formulated in the past, the latter considered as the social or contextual study of the intellects who proposed ideas in the past.'⁷¹ No one can credibly deny Edwards's importance as a *locus classicus* of evangelical Protestantism or the importance that this tradition has on both American history, and, as American evangelicalism gets imported to other parts of the world, the world stage as well. The trouble is that what Edwards actually thought about ethics may not matter very much for certain readings of certain portions of the latter history. Part of the philosopher of religion's scholarly task is to worry about what a text might mean on its own terms apart from how it was appropriated by contemporaneous or subsequent readers; and this, as I will explain below, has significant implications for those historical narratives considered above and others that encompass Edwards.

The field is presently experiencing a kind of overwhelming *embarrass de riches* in which the multiplication of sources and genres has truly made Edwards, in Michael McClymond's evocative phrase, a 'protean Puritan.'⁷² It is an embarrassment of a more pejorative kind that after the significant attention it has received, the Edwards secondary literature is not represented in depth and precision commensurately with volume. Often touted as one of the exciting aspects of the field,⁷³ it is also a sign of immaturity. An Edwards that can be connected to

⁷¹ Knud Haakonssen, 'Enlightened Dissent: an introduction,' in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge [U.K.]: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996), 1.

⁷² McClymond, 'The Protean Puritan: *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, Volumes 8 to 16,' *Religious Studies Review* 24, No. 4 (October 1998): 361–367.

⁷³ M.X. Lesser, *Jonathan Edwards: An Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1994), xiii.

just about anything is an Edwards whose work can mean just about anything. Still absent is anything like the kind of back and forth argumentation among, for instance, Augustine scholars whose books on free will make elaborate cases demarcating alternative views of his 'early position' and 'later position.'⁷⁴ The proliferation of readily available documents, for all the sophistication it creates in the contextualization of individual texts, has continued to enable the misdescription of broader features of Edwards's thought. Even as contemporary American religious historians interested in Edwards have corrected some of the excesses of generality made by philosophers and theologians of previous generations with their greater attention to period detail and socio-cultural context—they are certainly not dogmatically motivated in this respect—scrupulously eschewing sustained reliance on dogmatic interpretive categories has, ironically, allowed out-of-date assumptions about Edwards's relationship to Calvinism to stand.⁷⁵ Moral perfection is regarded as misleading because of original sin, objectionable because of the slippery slope to legalism, impossible because human activity can only be a means God uses to implement absolute sovereignty, and otherwise unnecessary because only God can tell the presence of justification by faith. And again Edwards's ethics and his theology are perpetuated as more separate spheres.

In the following chapters, I will begin instead from the assumption that Edwards shared extremely commonplace seventeenth-century discourses about virtue in which many Protestant permutations of cooperation between human and divine agency exist and approach the precise contours of Edwardsean virtue therein as an open question. In particular, I will be taking the view that Edwards should be included as part of the trajectory of what E. Brooks Holifield has called 'catholic theologians' who 'proposed no alteration of Calvinist doctrine,' but who 'subtly modified and expanded the older vocabulary in order to make more room for natural causes and moral virtues.'⁷⁶ Edwards views on

⁷⁴ See, e.g., James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); J. Patout Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1980); and Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London: Burns & Oates).

⁷⁵ See Stephen A. Wilson, 'A Question of Balance: Evangelical Revivalism, Calvinist Theology, and Enlightenment Philosophy in George M. Marsden's *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*,' *Connecticut History*, forthcoming.

⁷⁶ Holifield, *Theology in America*, 82. Amy Plantinga Pauw likens Edwards to 'men like Tillotsen or Barrow [who] were ... mediating figures, breaking with some aspects of their theological inheritance while holding on to traditional understandings about

the latter have been discussed often enough. And as my comments on Delattre, Holbrook, Fiering, and Ramsey above indicate, I do not feel that prior accounts have incorporated enough of Edwards's Calvinist mainstays. With regard to natural causes, however, I believe those with a clear appreciation for his Calvinism have failed to appreciate some more 'catholick' nuances in his views. Particularly in making the latter case, in contrast to many who still read such works as *Original Sin* and *Freedom of the Will* in light of earlier works more connected with the revivals and more amenable to twentieth-century evangelical and neo-orthodox conceptions of Calvinism, it will also become clear that I believe granting precedence to mature published writings over early and unpublished ones yields the most comprehensive reading of Edwards's ethical position.

Protestant Scholasticism as a Historical Frame

Among the most unwieldy obstacles for the ratcheting up of Edwards studies to a fully critical field are the anachronistic assumptions about the parameters of the Reformed theology he could and should have found authoritative. Significant voices in Reformation studies and seventeenth-century studies have now emphasized the distorting qualities of the twentieth-century dogmatic concern about scholasticism as suspect because indissoluble from un-Protestant conceptions of causality, human freedom, and the importance of classical philosophical texts.⁷⁷ An ever-increasing stream of new research in the Reformed tradition has sought to depict scholasticism as a common method of discourse categorically present in all continental theology curricula from the twelfth century to the eighteenth—whether Catholic, Lutheran, Reformed, Anglican or Dissenting—and thus presupposing no particular doctrinal content.⁷⁸ From the perspective of the seventeenth cen-

human sinfulness and the need for divine revelation and grace' ('Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 20, 12).

⁷⁷ Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520–ca. 1725*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), Vol. 1, 27–37, 60–84, 140–149, 376–382.

⁷⁸ Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 26; Antonie Vos, 'Scholasticism and Reformation,' in *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise*, ed. Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 99–119; Eef Dekker,

tury, for instance, it is not at all uncommon for the same author to directly engage the reader in personal discourses on practical topics of Christian living to kindle piety and elsewhere to use highly refined scholastic categories to fine-tune Reformed doctrine in disputation with Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anabaptists, Socinians, Arminians and other Reformed authors and texts. Richard Baxter and Gisbert Voetius—both of whom are included in the background of Edwards's ethics in this book—are identified by Richard Muller as two figures in the movement of Protestant scholasticism who embodied both genres.⁷⁹ To understand Edwards's ethics one must make the acquaintance of the Reformed scholastics.

Even as they criticized Roman Catholic dogmatics, Peter Martyr Vermigli (1500–1562), Girolamo Zanchi (1516–1590), Francis Turretin (1623–1687) shared a substratum of Aristotelian logic and ethical categories with the Thomistic program of learning.⁸⁰ Their application of Aristotelian means of argumentation often led to subtle and mostly unacknowledged rapprochements between Protestants and Catholics on the general parameters of what it means for Christian ethics to be philosophically satisfying.⁸¹ Paired with a syllogistic method of argumentation one finds an increasing willingness to place the insights of philosophy along side of Scripture in an explanatory and clarifying capacity.⁸² The use of Aristotelian argumentation is highly visible in the

'An Ecumenical Debate between Reformation and Counter-Reformation? Bellarmine and Ames on *liberum arbitrium*,' in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, ed. Asselt and Dekker, 141–154.

⁷⁹ Muller, *After Calvin*, 18.

⁸⁰ John Patrick Donnelly, S.J., 'Calvinist Thomism,' *Viator* 7 (1976): 441.

⁸¹ For a general discussion of the various schools of Aristotelian philosophy in the Renaissance see the work of Charles B. Schmitt, *Aristotle and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, Mass.: Published for Oberlin College by Harvard University Press, 1983); 'Philosophy and Science in Sixteenth-Century Universities: Some Preliminary Comments,' in *The Cultural Context of Medieval Learning*, ed. J.E. Murdoch & E.D. Sylla (Dordrecht: 1975); 'Towards a Reassessment of Renaissance Aristotelianism,' *History of Science* 11 (1973): 159–193; and Jill Kraye, 'Moral Philosophy,' in *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy*, ed. Charles B. Schmitt and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988), 303–386.

⁸² Calvin warns against taking good works as a primary, rather than a secondary, assessment of election. See Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956), 169–181; and R.T. Kendall, 'The Puritan Modification of Calvin's Theology,' in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, ed. W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1982), 208–209. He nevertheless recognizes good works as the fruits of the calling of the elect (*Institutes of the Christian Religion* III, xiv, 18). For insight into how the practical syllogism played itself out in

writings of Vermigli and Zanchi,⁸³ for example.⁸⁴ Each taught Aristotle;⁸⁵ and each used syllogistic reasoning for expository as well as polemical purposes (though for Vermigli the latter was much more common than the former).⁸⁶ 'Particularly by way of contrast with various skeptical and rationalist philosophies,' Muller observes, '... modified Aristotelianism or modified Thomism appeared useful to the Reformed orthodox and, therefore, retained its ancillary role in theology.'⁸⁷ When it comes to their systematic presentations of Christian ethics, both Vermigli and Zanchi use the Decalogue as the primary schema whereas Aquinas, relying more heavily still on classical sources, uses a list of theological and moral virtues.⁸⁸ Nevertheless, it cannot be stressed enough that standing behind the practical syllogism in the moral theology of the Protestant scholastics is the Aristotelian view of virtues as ingrained character traits. Even Theophilus Gale, whose *Court of the Gentiles* was at least in part designed to place the Platonic stream of the Christian virtue tradition in a more privileged place against aspects of the Aristotelian stream, still refers extensively and positively to Aristotle, Aquinas, as well as many medieval and patristic sources that draw

Puritanism, see Stoever, *'A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven,'* 147–154, 126–129; and Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism and the Dutch Second Reformation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 113–115, 159–169.

⁸³ Edwards does refer to Zanchi at least once in reference to the fall of the angels (*WJE* 23, 198).

⁸⁴ Students of Peter Martyr Vermigli are very fortunate in the continuing *Peter Martyr Library* (Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies). Portions of Vermigli's Strasbourg lectures on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1553–1556) are now available in English (*The Peter Martyr Reader*, trans. John Patrick Donnelly, Frank A. James, and Joseph C. McLelland [Kirksville, Mo.: Truman State University Press, 1999], 208–219), as are portions of his commentary on 1 Cor. (*ibid.*, 134–150), and his introduction to his commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (*Philosophical Works: On the Relation of Philosophy to Theology*, trans. and ed. Joseph C. McLelland [Kirksville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Essays and Studies, 1996], 6–17).

⁸⁵ John Patrick Donnelly, S.J., 'Italian Influences on the Development of Calvinist Scholasticism' *Sixteenth Century Journal* VII, No. 1 (April 1976): 84.

⁸⁶ Vermigli's commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* was only completed to the first half of Book Three. But it retains strong links with the Christian virtue tradition, e.g., it views virtues as habits either praised or blamed relative to a mean between extremes. Donnelly suggests that Martyr was less dependent on syllogistic reasoning as a bolster to scriptural exegesis than Zanchi (*Protestantism and Scholasticism in Vermigli's Doctrine of Man and Grace* [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976], 200).

⁸⁷ Muller, *After Calvin*, 35. On Zanchi's use of Aquinas, see Harm Goris, 'Thomism in Zanchi's Doctrine of God,' in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, ed. Van Asselt and Dekker, 121–139.

⁸⁸ Donnelly, *Calvinism and Scholasticism*, 85, n52.

prominently upon Aristotle.⁸⁹ In the fourth part of the sprawling text, devoted to the question of reforming the use of philosophy by theology, Aristotle is cited singly on the nature of virtues *qua* habits,⁹⁰ on the notion that virtue is the repository of the greatest beauty,⁹¹ and other matters of bridging ethics and metaphysics. Aristotle and Plato are conjointly cited on what constitutes a last end in human volition,⁹² on the concept of a person's overall trajectory or *pondus*,⁹³ on the involuntariness of vice,⁹⁴ and the dependence of second causes on first causes.⁹⁵ Aquinas too is cited often and appreciatively, e.g., on the last end of human beings,⁹⁶ the beauty of God as an ultimate end,⁹⁷ on a moral action receiving its species from its object and end,⁹⁸ on the nature of virtue *qua* habit,⁹⁹ and on the divinity of virtue.¹⁰⁰

The case of Turretin, for whom Edwards expressed a significant affinity—is worth focusing on at some length. Although Turretin's conception of virtue is significantly less robust than his sixteenth-century antecedents among Protestant scholastics, he does share the latter's prominent use of Aristotle to a notable extent. He employs from the *Nicomachean Ethics* the definition of the faculty of choice as a combination of will and intellect,¹⁰¹ the primary determination of the will as attraction or repulsion (in the intellect 'affirmation and negation' and in the will 'desire and avoidance'),¹⁰² and the view of as habits as states indicating the propensity of the soul in our power to acquire but not to resist once acquired.¹⁰³ Citing Aquinas, Turretin characterizes sin as

⁸⁹ For a succinct statement of Gale in the stream of Protestant scholasticism see Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, 2nd edition, Vol. 1, 392–393.

⁹⁰ Theophilus Gale, *Court of the Gentiles: ... Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie* (London: By J. Macock, for Thomas Cockeril, 1677), 74.

⁹¹ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 84.

⁹² Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 11.

⁹³ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 34.

⁹⁴ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 85.

⁹⁵ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 408.

⁹⁶ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 3.

⁹⁷ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 16–17.

⁹⁸ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 46, 62.

⁹⁹ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 74.

¹⁰⁰ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 77.

¹⁰¹ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing House, 1992), Vol. 1, 660 (Tenth Topic, Question 1, section IV).

¹⁰² Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol. 1, 660–661 (Tenth Topic, Question 1, section V).

¹⁰³ Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol. 1, 662 (Tenth Topic, Question 2, section IV).

not only a state of privation of good or faith but of the positive possession of corrupt habits.¹⁰⁴ This corruption, voluntary in its origin though involuntary in its maintenance, becomes 'unconquerable and insuperable, no less than the purely natural inability of the blind man to see and of the dead man to rise.'¹⁰⁵ Turretin subsequently uses Aristotle's conception of virtue as having the inferior part of the soul subordinated to superior as a metaphor for the gracious transformation from a state of sin.¹⁰⁶ The achievement of the state of righteousness subordinating the previous sinful habits is subsequently alluded to as 'habit infused by grace and acquired by practice.'¹⁰⁷ Turretin further invokes the term 'practical syllogism' to characterize the state of assurance of salvation. Although when stating what the syllogism is he uses '[w]hoever truly believes' as the major premise,¹⁰⁸ in the previous question he already made clear that 'it is most false that he will be safe in whatever way or on the supposition of moral failure whatever.'¹⁰⁹ Instead, he insists that 'God ... decrees the salvation of the elect as certain and sure, but the same God decrees it is certain only in the way of faith and holiness.'¹¹⁰ The person who wishes to enjoy more than an episodic assurance 'must labor with all his strength to obtain for his solace a more vivid sense of it every day in the advance of sanctification.'¹¹¹ So much for the anti-Aristotelianism of Reformed thought.¹¹² While Edwards read both Peter van Mastricht and Turretin appreciatively,¹¹³ Kenneth Minkema is right when he regards currently scholarly assessments as at the level of blanket affirmations rather than nuanced analyses of substantiated connections.¹¹⁴ This book hopes to offer a more detailed account of the relationship to this stream of Reformed thought.

¹⁰⁴ Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol. 1, 592 (Ninth Topic, Question 1, section V).

¹⁰⁵ Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol. 1, 682 (Tenth Topic, Question 4, section XXXVIII).

¹⁰⁶ Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol. 1, 473 (Fifth Topic, Question 11, section XV). Elsewhere, of course, Turretin stipulates that it is grace that makes the liberation from this corrupt habit possible (*Institutes*, Vol. 1, 683, Tenth Topic, Question 4, section XXXVIII).

¹⁰⁷ Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol. 1, 473 (Fifth Topic, Question 11, section XVII).

¹⁰⁸ Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol. 1, 374 (Fourth Topic, Question 13, section IV).

¹⁰⁹ Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol. 1, 372 (Fourth Topic, Question 12, section XXII).

¹¹⁰ Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol. 1, 372 (Fourth Topic, Question 12, section XXII).

¹¹¹ Turretin, *Institutes*, Vol. 1, 379 (Fourth Topic, Question 13, section XXVII).

¹¹² As my many references to multiple works throughout this book indicates, I am highly indebted to the work of Richard A. Muller in making this assessment.

¹¹³ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 318.

¹¹⁴ Kenneth P. Minkema, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 14, 45n9.

While the Enlightenment is widely regarded as a time when the archaic methodology of Aristotelianism is thrown over through the good graces of logicians like Peter Ramus, epistemologists such as Descartes, and natural scientists like Newton, the transition of the moral philosophy curriculum at seventeenth-century Harvard from a broad scholasticism to the 'new philosophy' of moral sense theory (painstakingly documented by Norman Fiering) does not mean the Aristotelian tradition in ethics with its concepts of virtue and habituation disappeared from the early eighteenth-century intellectual landscape. Nicolas Malebranche, who drew particularly strongly on Aristotle in his *Treatise on Ethics*, was widely read.¹¹⁵ The moral sense theory that Edwards prominently engaged in the *Two Dissertations* itself encompasses its own forms of 'habit' even if it is divorced from other features of scholastic psychology.¹¹⁶ Nor did moral sense theory singularly replace scholastic ethics. The natural law tradition was at least as prominent an alternative; and whether it ever fully separated itself from the virtue tradition is debatable.¹¹⁷ Neoplatonism, from its very origins, embodied a distinctive version of the Aristotelian psychology of habits and habituation which Cambridge Platonists did not directly challenge. Fiering has astutely recognized that Henry More, for instance, 'launched no sustained attack on Aristotle, and among the continuities he offered with the past study of moral philosophy was a moderate Aristotelianism in some matters.'¹¹⁸ Fiering argues that More does

¹¹⁵ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 43; Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 525n41.

¹¹⁶ Shaftesbury, for one, certainly thought that the proper sensibilities could be dissipated through disuse. 'That which is of original and pure Nature,' he writes, 'nothing beside contrary Habit and Custom (a second Nature) is able to displace' ('An Inquiry concerning Virtue,' Book I, Part III, section ii, in *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times*, fifth edition [London, 1732]; reprinted in L.A. Selby-Bigge, *British Moralists ...* [Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964], 20–21). In societies where 'certain Actions naturally foul and odious are repeatedly view'd with Applause, and Honour ascrib'd to them,' it is possible, for instance, 'that a Man, forcing himself, may eat the Flesh of his Enemys, not only against his Stomach, but against his Nature ... as supposing it to be of considerable service to his Community, and capable of advancing the Name, and spreading the Terror of his Nation' ('An Inquiry concerning Virtue,' Book I, Part III, section ii; Selby-Bigge, *British Moralists*, 22).

¹¹⁷ On the role left to virtue in the early modern natural law tradition see J.B. Schneewind, 'The Misfortunes of Virtue,' *Ethics* 101 (October 1990): 42–63.

¹¹⁸ Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 259. Indeed, notes Fiering, '[i]t is significant that More's *Enchiridion Ethicum*, despite the label "Platonist" attached to it, called upon Aristotle for direct support of arguments on 65 out of 268 pages and Plato and Platonists on only 15 pages' (*ibid.*).

modify the standard Aristotelian conception of virtue as needing to be conceived as habits and rightly regards this as taking place not by repudiating the moral psychology of habit but in the fact that he 'put the *Eudemian Ethics*, the most Platonic and the most religious of Aristotle's ethical works, in the forefront of his treatment, and by a highly selective method of quoting, metamorphosed Aristotle into a Christian Neoplatonist.'¹¹⁹ This is far from negating the pronounced effect of Aristotelian ethical ideas on Cambridge Platonists. Each of those we shall be considering to some degree incorporated Aristotle's moral psychology of habits in characterizing the regenerate state, for instance. John Smith describes religion as 'Mother and Nurse, leading the Soul to God, and so impregnating that inward vital principle of *activity* and [sic] *vigour* that is embosom'd in it, that it is able without any inward disturbance and resistance from any controlling Lusts to exercise it self.'¹²⁰ This principle, when it begins to be felt in the self, is 'but as the Wings of the Morning spreading themselves upon the Mountains,' but as it gains a foothold, it can be felt to be 'chasing away all the filthy mists and vapours of Sin and Wickedness before it, till it arrives to its Meridian altitude.'¹²¹ At this 'meridian' point, Smith insists, '[t]here is the strength and force of the Divinity in it'¹²² Benjamin Whichcote adds that Christ's incarnation, by dwelling in a shared nature with human beings, has the effect of '... working Righteousness in it: by which means he hath wrought out, *all Malignity*, and *naughty Habits*, by contrary Acts; *the Acts of Sin and Vice*, by Acts of Vertue and Goodness'¹²³ The indwelling of the holy spirit overrides whatever contrary motives exist in a confluence of vectors which, 'like so many lines meet together in one and the same Centre.'¹²⁴ This resultant state of spontaneous and unified vigor is subsequently characterized by Smith as what it means to 'act with the greatest complacency in the most full and

¹¹⁹ Fiering, *Moral Philosophy At Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 260; Fiering attributes the Christianization of Aristotle to both Golius and Burgersdyck, two prominent seventeenth-century scholastic ethicists (*Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 92).

¹²⁰ Smith, 'The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion,' in *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. C.A. Patrides (London: Edward Arnold, 1969; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 159; italics original.

¹²¹ Smith, 'The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion,' 191.

¹²² Smith, 'The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion,' 191.

¹²³ Benjamin Whichcote, 'The Manifestation of Christ and Deification of Man,' in *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. C.A. Patrides, 70; italics original.

¹²⁴ Smith, 'The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion,' 172.

ample manner upon that *First, Universal and Unbounded* Essence which is God himself.¹²⁵ Whichcote concurs that '[i]t was a signal Evidence of a Divine Power in the Disciples of Christ ... that it wrought so great an Alteration in all those that did receive it,' that '[i]t converted the Embracers of it, to a Life more suitable to Reason, and Nature, and Moral Vertue.'¹²⁶ 'Our Souls acting upon God, discover their Vertues; and display their Powers; and show their Mettle and Sprightfulness.'¹²⁷ Henry More's observation that '... inward Propensity, and strong Inclinations, are not things of Deliberation and Choice; *But*, as *Theages* says [sic] *the very Strokes and Prints of Nature, where Vertue is implanted in us by a sort of Impulse or Enthusiasm*' comes within a discussion of why, even though reason is directly divine, passions are concurrently good when properly described.¹²⁸ Malebranche's *Treatise on Ethics* is less explicit about drawing together Aristotelian and Platonic sources, but we shall see in the following chapters that his position did so no less forcefully.

The uncritical use of a term like 'Aristotelianism,' as unfortunately loaded as it is ubiquitous, has been cautioned by many students of the Reformed tradition.¹²⁹ Rather than merely assuming that because Edwards employed the conceptuality of habits and virtues he must have adopted the whole range of 'Aristotelian' ethical ideas, I will do the harder work of sorting out the precise meaning of such terms by comparing their function in wide range of Edwards's own writings when set against at least a moderate range of texts that may be presumed to stand behind them as sources. At the same time, nor ought Edwards's ideas be neatly equated with any of the many Protestant scholastics I consider in the chapters which follow. His place in the Reformed tradition is, after all, subsequent to the dissolution of the internationally contested but still coherent consensus of the 'orthodoxy' movement

¹²⁵ Smith, 'The Excellency and Nobleness o True Religion,' 159; italics original.

¹²⁶ Whichcote, 'The Manifestation of Christ and Deification of Man,' 70.

¹²⁷ Whichcote, 'The Manifestation of Christ and Deification of Man,' 75.

¹²⁸ Henry More, *Enchiridion ethicum* (London, 1690; New York: Facsimile Text Society, 1930), 78–79; italics original. For an excellent treatment of the fine line More rides (not unlike Edwards in the *Religious Affections*) between extolling passionate religion guided by reason while excoriating against enthusiasm, see Daniel Clifford Fouke, *The Enthusiastical Concerns of Dr. Henry More: Religious Meaning and the Psychology of Delusion* (New York: E.J. Brill, 1997).

¹²⁹ See, e.g., Carl R. Trueman, 'Puritan Theology as Historical Event: A Linguistic Approach to the Ecumenical Context,' in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, ed. Van Asselt and Dekker, 261–262.

after 1725. Muller describes the latter as 'the decline of Protestant system under the impact of rationalism, pietism, and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century.'¹³⁰ I do not contest Fiering's substantial research supporting the conclusion that the prominence of commentary on Aristotle had largely diminished at Harvard by the turn of the eighteenth century.¹³¹ It is irrelevant for my purposes whether Edwards consciously and/or deliberately extracted arguments from the *Nicomachean Ethics* itself.¹³² I affirm only that Edwards is employing arguments powerfully expressed there and represent prominent features of Aristotelian ethics as that tradition was incorporated into Protestant moral theology.¹³³ The importance of gaining clarity on these issues is only underscored given the immature state of scholarship on the era of Protestant scholasticism immediately preceding Edwards.¹³⁴

The neglected span of the Reformed branch of Protestant scholasticism which animates the loose movement known as Amyraldism is highly suggestive. It would be an exaggeration to suggest that Moise Amyraut, active at the Samur Academy from the 1630s to the 1660s, adapted Aristotle's texts in the direct manner of Vermigli, say. But he sought to revise the philosophical underpinnings of classic Reformed

¹³⁰ Muller, *After Calvin*, 138.

¹³¹ Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Harvard*, 239.

¹³² Aristotle is noted in the entry on 'nature' in Ephraim Chamber's *Cyclopaedia: or an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (London, 1728) Edwards cites to rebut a critic of the *Religious Affections* ('Unpublished Letter on Assurance and Participation in the Divine Nature,' WJE 8, 637). In exploring Edwards's exposure to 'Aristotelian ethics' it must be noted that Solomon Stoddard's personal library was uncharacteristically extensive. Even in 1664, when 80 books appear in his catalogue [as opposed to 462 at his death in 1729], his library included many works devoted to scholasticism and at least one commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Golius's *Epitome Doctrinae Moralis, ex Decem Libris Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum Collecta* [Cambridge, 1634]) (Norman S. Fiering, 'Solomon Stoddard's Library at Harvard in 1664,' *Harvard Library Bulletin*, Volume XX, No. 3 [July 1972]: 255–269). The young Edwards presumably had access to his grandfather's library, at least while Stoddard was alive.

¹³³ Rather, one must keep in mind how pervasive the use of encyclopedia and compendia in the study of moral philosophy was during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. John T. Harwood brings this out well in connection with the work of Robert Boyle in *The Early Essays & Ethics of Robert Boyle* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Univ. Press, 1991).

¹³⁴ 'Once the dogmatizing grids [of the nineteenth- and twentieth-century theological polemics] have been set aside ...,' Muller argues, 'there remains an enormous amount of work to be done to uncover the actual developments of the era' (*After Calvin*, 192). As Antonie Vos observes, 'reformational scholasticism constitutes a rather forgotten world. One knows that it was, but scarcely what it was' (Antonie Vos, 'Scholasticism and Reformation,' in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, ed. Van Asselt and Dekker, 99; italics original).

doctrines of predestination and original sin using scholastic categories honed in debate with soon to become inhospitable French Catholicism. Expanding upon a distinction raised first by his Scottish teacher John Cameron, Amyraut stipulated that human beings had the natural ability to respond to grace while wholly lacking the volitional power (moral ability) to actually want to respond to grace. This allowed him, on the one hand, to preserve a desire in God to save everyone while, on the other hand, making it the human agent's fault that God's salvific will was not effective in everyone (his famous conception of conditional universal atonement). God could still be blamed of course, for not granting the all-sufficient assistance to supercede damning fallenness; but it did shift some of the arbitrariness of the mechanisms of election off of God's hidden will on to human responsibility. Muller assesses the present state of scholarship on the Amyraut controversy as needing to be reframed 'not [as] a debate between humanistic Calvinians and rigid, scholastic Calvinist orthodoxy, but [as] an internal debate of the Reformed orthodox and ... indeed, among the Reformed scholastics.'¹³⁵ In following Muller I will be seeking to connect Edwards, who significantly developed the distinction between natural and moral necessity, to a roomier sense of the philosophical possibilities within Calvinism than that allowed him by a univocal invocation of Dort's five points and an concomitantly uncritical acceptance of the charges of Arminianism levied by seventeenth- and twentieth-century anti-Samurs.¹³⁶

¹³⁵ Muller, *After Calvin*, 15–16.

¹³⁶ On the seventeenth-century context see, Frans Pieter van Stam, *The Controversy Over the Theology of Saumur, 1635–1650: Disrupting Debates Among the Huguenots in Complicated Circumstances* (Amsterdam: APA-Holland University Press, 1988), 41–44, 426–431. For an assessment of the contributions of seventeenth-century Calvinism to rationalism via Amyraut, see David Sabean, 'The Theological rationalism of Mose Amyraut,' *Archiv für Reformationgeschichte* 55, No. 2 (1964): 204–215. While the presence of Amyraldian ideas in seventeenth-century New England has been noticed (see, e.g., Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 126), few contemporaneous commentators have pursued the interpretive possibilities of this important connection. While he believes there remain important distinctions between Amyraut and Edwards, E. Brooks Holifield is a prominent exception (*Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], 116–117). But a full historical appreciation of what form these ideas were experienced by Edwards would require scholars to first take up Phillip Schaff's helpful suggestion that Edwards had access to the thought of the Samur Academy by way of eighteenth-century Reformed scholastic Johann Friedrich Stapfer (*The Creeds of Christendom, With A History and Critical Notes*, 4th edition [New York: Harper & Brothers, 1887], Vol. 1, 481n3).

Pushing the Theological Boundaries of Perfectionism

The downplaying of the role of works in Puritan thought can stem not only from the Reformed suspicion of Roman Catholic 'works righteousness;' it can also come from the hyper-separatist ecclesiology some Puritans shared with Separatists, and even Anabaptists (with which both groups had contact in the Low Countries).¹³⁷ This hyper-separatist ecclesiology is regarded as un-Calvinist in its departure from the balancing of anti-episcopacy with an regulated synodical structure of a church constituted by the administration of the sacraments, the preaching of the Gospel, and the maintenance of church discipline. There was a strong polemic against Anabaptism among the first generation of continental reformers in the Lutheran and Reformed traditions.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ When we assess the influence of continental Anabaptism on the English Reformation, it is first clear that we cannot leave the matter with a study of self-affirming English Anabaptists (David Loades, 'Anabaptism and English Sectarianism in the Mid-Sixteenth Century,' in *Reform and Reformation: England and the Continent 1500-1750*, ed. Derek Baker [Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1979], 63). The record of the presence of such is clear enough to suppose they had at least some minimal influence. See, for instance, Irvin B. Horst, *The Radical Brethren* (Nieuwkoop: B. de Graaf, 1972); William Estep, *The Anabaptist Story: An Introduction to Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism*, 3rd edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1996), 275-284; idem, 'Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism and the Puritan Connection: Reflections Upon Baptist Origins,' in *Mennonites and Baptists: A Continuing Conversation*, ed. Paul Toews (Hillsboro, Ks.: Kindred Press, 1993), 2; Ernest A. Payne, 'The Anabaptist Impact on Western Christendom,' in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender*, edited by Guy F. Herschberger (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1957), 312-315; Fred J. Zerger, 'Dutch Anabaptism in Elizabethan England,' *Mennonite Life*, XXVI (January 1971): 19-24. Some scholars downplay the connection between not only Anabaptism and Separatism but John Smyth and Separatism (B.R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition: From the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971); Joseph D. Ban, 'Were the Earliest English Baptists Anabaptists?,' in *In the Great Tradition: essays on pluralism, voluntarism and revivalism in honor of Winthrop S. Hudson*, ed. Joseph D. Ban and Paul R. Dekar [Valley Forge, Penn.: Judson Press, 1982], 91-106). The record of cross-fertilization is substantial enough, however, to suppose moderate influence after, if not before, 1610. See Keith L. Sprunger, 'Other Pilgrims in Leiden: Hugh Goodyear and the English Reformed Church,' *Church History* 41 (March 1972): 48-60; idem, 'The Meeting of Dutch Anabaptists and English Brownists Reported by P.J. Twisck,' in *The Contentious Triangle: Church, State and University: A Festschrift in honor of Professor George Hunston Williams* (Kirkville, Mo.: Thomas Jefferson University Press, 1999), 221-231; idem, 'English Puritans and Anabaptists in Early Seventeenth Century Amsterdam,' *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 46 (April 1972): 113-128; Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 284-303; idem, 'Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism and the Puritan Connection,' 1-38; C. Norman Kraus, 'Anabaptist Influence on English Separatism as Seen in Robert Browne,' *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 34 (1960): 5-19.

¹³⁸ John S. Oyer, 'The Reformers Oppose the Anabaptist Theology,' in *The Recovery*

And Anabaptism stood alongside Catholicism as positions that orthodox Reformed of the seventeenth century learned how to polemically engage.¹³⁹ In its overscrupulous efforts to distinguish itself from the Anabaptist trajectory of Separatist ecclesiology,¹⁴⁰ however, the standard historiography of Puritanism's transmigration from the Old World to the New has masked a further source of broader theological corroboration for those overtones of an Aristotelian ethic of virtue muted in Calvinist Reformed thought.¹⁴¹ The tradition of seventeenth-century

of the Anabaptist Vision: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender, ed. Guy F. Herschberger (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1957), 202–218.

¹³⁹ Muller, *After Calvin*, 110.

¹⁴⁰ With characteristic prescience, Thomas A. Shafer must be noted as an exception to this assumption among Edwards scholars. Shafer's 1955 article on Edwards's ecclesiology is a highly significant snapshot of Edwardsean studies before Perry Miller's revival of interest. Summarizing the conclusions of A.V.G. Allen, T.C. Hall, and V.L. Parrington, he observes that 'Edwards has long been associated with revivalism and sectarianism in American Protestantism' and that 'his teachings led to the separatistic exaltation of the invisible Church' ('Jonathan Edwards' Conception of the Church,' *Church History* XXIV [1955]: 51). David Laurence offers a contrary view in 1979 arguing that '... Edwards is best understood as a critic of the tradition of conversion that would dominate American Protestant evangelicalism in the nineteenth century and after' ('Jonathan Edwards, Solomon Stoddard, and the Preparationist Model of Conversion,' *Harvard Theological Review* 72 [July–October 1979]: 277). Shafer's attempt to dislodge the scholarly consensus that Edwards's ecclesiastical 'type' was 'Anglo-Saxon dissenting revivalistic congregationalism, not continental Calvinism' does seem to relate to my point that Edwards's conception of virtue has been muted by a vigilance to keep Puritanism separate from Separatism ('Jonathan Edwards' Conception of the Church,' 51). It is hard to evaluate, however, whether Shafer's interpretation of classic Protestant ecclesiology was idiosyncratic in 1955 for its amenability to Edwards's conception of visible sainthood or whether he, as it is to be regretted many American church historians have over the years, merely read sixteenth-century Reformed thought through the lens of Edwardsean and/or broader twentieth-century Protestant 'orthodoxy.'

¹⁴¹ One reason for this lies in the highly negative polemics of the 'magisterial' Reformers (Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 1; Oyer, 'The Reformers Oppose the Anabaptist Theology,' 203). Oyer notes that 'Zwingli and Bullinger condemned the Anabaptists ... [because] they disrupted the religious order and they threatened the peace and even the existence of the civil order' in their divergent views on baptism and the relationship between the civil magistracy and clergy, but concludes that these concerns insufficiently distinguished the 'Swiss Brethren' from the 'Münsterites' (203, 209). Michael McGiffert notes that '[i]t may be no coincidence that Archbishop Matthew Parker warned Burghley the next spring [after the lectures of Edward Dering's that would first be published in 1576 under the title *Praelections ... upon Certain of the First Chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews*] of Anabaptist impulses in nonconformity; he perhaps perceived incipient Münsterism in Dering's elevation of the new covenant at the expense of the old' (McGiffert, 'Grace and Works: The Rise and Division of Covenant Divinity in Elizabethan Puritanism,' *Harvard Theological Review* 75, No. 4 [Oct. 1982]: 492). Whether English or American, many a Puritan, with William Ames, 'emphatically ... did not

Reformed orthodoxy was a thoroughly international community. John Owen and Richard Baxter are particularly singled out by Muller in this regard;¹⁴² and Voetius is noted as recommending William Perkins and John Preston, among others, as productive sources for 'piety and practice.'¹⁴³ But this does not mean that the same polemics were operative in all locations. Certainly the fluid and complex interpenetration of Reformed ideas between non-separating Puritans and their separating nonconformist counterparts created alternative possibilities for the relationship between sanctification and justification beyond Calvin's Geneva. Although to a lesser extent than Protestant scholasticism, I have also drawn on the moderate cluster of secondary sources less concerned to distance the Calvinist influenced Puritanism-Separatist tradition from their more Anabaptist-leaning brethren to allow Edwards's significantly perfectionistic voice to be heard.

One must be careful not to underestimate the ethical thrust of Calvin's thought. For the Geneva Reformer too, 'a justified sinner is essentially a *new creation*.'¹⁴⁴ But Calvin's strong suspicion of works was more forcefully tempered by other early Reformed figures.¹⁴⁵ Martin Bucer,

care to have his name linked with them [Anabaptists]' (Keith L. Sprunger, 'William Ames, A Seventeenth-Century Puritan, Looks at the Anabaptists,' *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 39 [1965]: 74). In the prefatory poem by Henry Seligns, Menno Simons is mentioned by name in the *Magnalia Christi Americana* when the heresies that New England was 'founded' to resist are identified: Rome, fanaticism, Arminius, followed by Menno and Spinoza (Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Books I and II, edited by Kenneth B. Murdock with the assistance of Elizabeth W. Miller [Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 1977], 86). Robert Friedmann adds that the magisterial Reformation's polemic against Anabaptism has always involved the claim of works-righteousness (Robert Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism: An Interpretation* [Eugene, Or.: Wipf and Stock, (1973), 1998], 24).

¹⁴² Muller, *After Calvin*, 41.

¹⁴³ Muller, *After Calvin*, 115.

¹⁴⁴ Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation*, 2nd edition (New York: Longman, 1995), 140; italics original.

¹⁴⁵ While Bucer cautions the epistemological imperfections that can sometimes arise in the judgment of salvific status (W.P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970], 30–34, 78–83), a greater confidence in saints about their righteousness seems to follow from the greater insistence on sanctification in the *ordo salutis*. Bucer writes in his *Commonplaces*, for instance, that '... those in whom these virtues [trust in God, firm hope of eternal life, sincere love for God and mankind] and this zeal for every good work are not to be found are also devoid of true faith in Christ, do not belong to him, are not members of him and therefore are not Christians' (*Commonplaces of Martin Bucer*, trans. & ed., D.F. Wright, The Courtenay Library of Reformation Classics 4 [Appleford [U.K.]: The Sutton Courtenay Press, 1972], 81).

for instance, offered both a less negative assessment than Calvin of sin from which the regenerate are redeemed,¹⁴⁶ and a more positive conception of the virtue to which they are enabled.¹⁴⁷ One particularly interesting manifestation of this greater emphasis on the renewability of humanity is Bucer's willingness in 1547 to institute 'Christlichen Gemeinschaften,' small communities within the broader church body, who 'were thus assigned the mission of stimulating the whole parish to better practice of the Christian life'¹⁴⁸ Calvin certainly held out for a robust conception of the *corpus christianorum*.¹⁴⁹ But while Calvin argues that the spiritual jurisdiction and temporal jurisdiction of the church must never be finally distinguished, he does separate them more forcefully than Bucer.¹⁵⁰ Bernard Reardon writes that '[t]he *De regno Christi* envisages a "Christian commonwealth", *respublica Christiana*, within which no detail of the common life, spiritual or temporal, would remain unregulated.... The aim of both the spiritual and the temporal orders is thus the establishment of Christ's rule in the community, which as a body of faithful Christians, will always

¹⁴⁶ Bucer regards it as one of the distinguishing features separating saints from the reprobate that the former sin only unwillingly (Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer*, 82–83, 30–36).

¹⁴⁷ Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation*, 140.

¹⁴⁸ Gottfried Hammann, 'Ecclesiastical motifs behind the creation of "Christlichen Gemeinschaften,"' in *Martin Bucer: Reforming church and community*, ed. D.F. Wright (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), 141. Luther entertained the idea only to resist the 'temptation' because of their potential to dissipate church unity (*ibid.*, 130–131). On the 'Christlichen Gemeinschaften,' see further Amy Nelson Burnett, *The Yoke of Christ: Martin Bucer and Christian Discipline*, Sixteenth Century Essays & Studies (Kirkville, Mo.: Sixteenth Century Journal, 1994), 163–207; and Willem van 't Spijker, *The Ecclesiastical Offices in the Thought of Martin Bucer*, trans. John Vriend and Lyle D. Bierma (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1996), 306–343. The relationship between these special communities and the radical discipleship motif in Anabaptism is not accidental. Bucer was in close contact with Anabaptists—now engaging in dialogue, now issuing edicts to banish them from Strasbourg (see John S. Oyer, 'Bucer and the Anabaptists,' in *Martin Bucer and Sixteenth Century Europe*, Christian Krieger and Marc Lienhard [Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993], 2:603–613). It has been suggested that while he disagreed with them on the nature of the church and many other matters of import, 'he was impressed by the exemplary strength of their commitment' (Hammann, 'Ecclesiastical motifs,' 132; see also Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer*, 16). Indeed, one scholar has suggested that it was the unquenchability of Anabaptism in and around Strasbourg that finally convinced him to implement the idea of Christlichen Gemeinschaften rejected by Luther, i.e., an attempt to offer within the church what up until then had to be pursued outside of the church (Hammann, 'Ecclesiastical motifs,' 130–133).

¹⁴⁹ Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation*, 157–162.

¹⁵⁰ Van 't Spijker, 42–44. Reardon shares the view that the *De regno Christi* expresses

be motivated by love and mutual service.¹⁵¹ Bucer's higher expectations both for fallen humanity in the personal and higher expectations for renewability in the ecclesiastical and civic spheres have direct implications for the boundaries placed on the meaning of the requirement of visible sainthood in Puritan thought.¹⁵² Bucer's interest in 'Christlichen Gemeinschaften,' grounded in the high priority he placed on the early church fathers, pagan moral classics, and on the continuities between Christian and pagan virtue, is a prominent enough an option within the Reformed conversation,¹⁵³ at any rate, to caution against too sharply distinguishing Puritan views from Anabaptist views on the level of ethico-religious action uniquely achieved by 'saints.'¹⁵⁴

in detailed fashion ideas present in Bucer's writings from the beginning (*Religious Thought in the Reformation*, 140).

¹⁵¹ Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation*, 246–247.

¹⁵² Martin Greschat, 'The relation between church and civil community in Bucer's reforming work,' trans. Penelope R. Hall and D.F. Wright, in *Martin Bucer*, ed. D.F. Wright, 24. Constantin Hopf includes Bucer in his praise of those who insisted that 'a Reformation in England will be achieved not by concentrating on suggestions for remedies of special abuses in Church ceremonies and practices, but by reflecting on an entire social, ecclesiastical and economic Reform of the English system of Church and State' (*Martin Bucer and the English Reformation* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946], 99). On Bucer's effect on the English Reformation, see also Amy Nelson Burnett, *The Yoke of Christ: Martin Bucer and Christian Discipline*, 208–216; and David F. Wright, 'Martin Bucer and England—And Scotland,' in *Martin Bucer and Sixteenth Century Europe*, Christian Krieger and Marc Lienhard (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1993), 2:523–532; and Van 't Spijker, *The Ecclesiastical Offices*, 345–366.

¹⁵³ Irena Backus, 'Martin Bucer and the Patristic Tradition,' in *Martin Bucer and Sixteenth Century*, Krieger and Lienhard, 55–69; Hopf, *Martin Bucer and the English Reformation*, 212–213; Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation*, 139.

¹⁵⁴ In the new relationship with Christ initiated by God's love, believers found themselves willing and able to follow the most rigorous construal of the expectations of discipleship. Those who found themselves unwilling or unable to follow the Anabaptist avowal of nonresistance to evil, for example, were thought not to be responding to God's love. '... [R]edemption consists in a complete transvaluation of conventional values,' notes Friedmann, 'offering a mountaintop view where the perspective is changed and where the forces of love become as natural as the forces of self-assertion and competition on the lower level' (Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism*, 86–87; see also Friedmann, 'The Doctrine of the Two Worlds,' in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, ed. Hersherberger, 111). Both Bucer and Bullinger were highly critical of the Anabaptists. Ian Hazlett succinctly describes the principle components of the Anabaptist threat to Reformed thought ('Eucharistic communion: impulses and directions in Martin Bucer's Thought,' in *Martin Bucer: Reforming Church and Community*, ed. D.F. Wright [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994], 74–75). But when the history of Anabaptism is read through the lens of the magisterial Reformation's critique one gets a very different impression from what was objectionable about it within the standpoint of Puritanism and the English Reformation. For Calvin, one of the principle

Henry Ainsworth is singled out among Puritans by Muller as having a substantial career in the Netherlands and moving back and forth between the boundaries of the Reformed and Separatist movements there and in England.¹⁵⁵

There are several strong reasons speaking against the case for historical influence of Anabaptists on English Separatism.¹⁵⁶ Clearly, similarity of belief does not by itself prove causal connection. But even if, as Stephen Brachlow suggests, '[w]hether the first appearance of a baptist ecclesiology within English dissent arose primarily as the result of dynamics inherent to left-wing puritanism and separatism or from the cross-fertilization of separatist and Dutch anabaptist ideals is a problem

problems with Anabaptism was in the complex of issues surrounding its perfectionism. The latter cannot be taken as a separate issue from the Anabaptists' interpretation of scripture, their views on the sacraments, and their understanding of church state relations, etc.; but it is crucial to recognize that not all of these views were problematic for English Separatists, even for Puritans. The sympathies Bucer and Bullinger shared with the Anabaptists despite their strong critique emphasizes the breadth of support for that aspect of the sixteenth-century Protestant conversation which connected virtue more strongly with salvific status than did Calvin. Although he felt that the harshness of the ethos of Anabaptist separation obscured the loving ethic of Christianity, Bucer seemed particularly sympathetic to its ethical bent (Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer*, 16–17). Deflating the hegemony of Calvinism in the heritage of sixteenth-century Reformed thought accentuates the extent to which Edwards's change of heart on church membership took him 'perilously' close in theory to the Separatism and Anabaptism he took such pains to distinguish himself from in practice. David Hall notes, for instance, the puzzled reaction of some radical separatists to the *Humble Inquiry*, i.e., that Edwards should require determinate signs of true holiness for participation in the Lord's Supper but still consider the unbaptized as potential members of the visible church ('Editor's Introduction,' *Ecclesiastical Writings*, 81). Michael P. Winship notes the awareness of Anglo-American Puritan divines attracted to the immediate 'seal of the Spirit' as an charismatic alternative to syllogistic introspection of its close relationship to many groups they considered heretical (*Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Grace in Massachusetts, 1636–1641* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002], 21–27).

¹⁵⁵ Muller, *After Calvin*, 156–174.

¹⁵⁶ It is, first of all, fallacious reasoning to infer a confluence of causes from a confluence of effects (Ban, 102; Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 267). Second, 'confusion ... arises from associating ideas that had quite different meanings in different historical periods' (Ban, 102). Loades cautions that the record of polemics against Anabaptists in early Tudor England 'need not be accepted by the modern scholar' because 'English "anabaptism" as it was first known and condemned in the 1530s was a generic term, embracing some views which would earlier have been known as "lollard", and were indigenous' (Loades, 'Anabaptism and English Sectarianism,' 60). Third, specific doctrinal disagreements between such English Separatists as Thomas Helwys and the Anabaptists can be documented (Estep, 'Sixteenth-Century Anabaptism,' 24).

likely never to be solved to every historian's satisfaction,¹⁵⁷ the debate cannot be concluded decisively on these grounds.¹⁵⁸ This putative stalemate nevertheless has some results for our inquiry. For if anything like a consensus has been achieved in the secondary literature, it is that more examples of more general commonalities can be found between groups separated on specific issues. In short, it is possible to admit broad areas of theological convergence between the English Reformers and continental Anabaptists without reducing one movement to a development of the other.¹⁵⁹ With respect to the intra-Anglo context, Brachlow has argued forcefully that radical Puritans shares much more with their Separatist counterparts in the way of ecclesiology and soteriology than their differences over whether the Church of England was beyond salvaging would suggest.¹⁶⁰ My invocation of the cluster of ideas Anabaptism shares with the Reformed heritage is far from being 'the key' to the problem of Edwardsean *virtue* in the sense of trumping all other sources. Although it is only one piece of a highly variegated puzzle, however, it is important enough and has been neglected enough that its restoration puts all of the other pieces into a different relationship to each other.

Recognition of this 'other Protestantism' in the wellspring of ethical thought from which Edwards drew his Puritanism places Edwards's ecclesiastical writings closer to the core of Edwardsean texts and ideas than in any extant study of his ethics. This is one of the places where I hope that the model of ethics I offer will also be of use to scholars working in other areas of Edwards's thought. For scholars remain uncertain about why he felt it needful to depart from the position of his predecessor on church membership. David D. Hall skillfully

¹⁵⁷ Stephen Brachlow, *The Communion of Saints: Radical Puritan and Separatist Ecclesiology 1570–1625* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 155.

¹⁵⁸ Stephen Brachlow, 'John Smyth and the Ghost of Anabaptism: A Rejoinder,' *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 30 (July 1984): 296–300 is a response to James R. Coggins, 'The Theological Positions of John Smyth,' *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 30 (April 1984): 247–264; and Douglas Shantz, 'The Place of the Resurrected Christ in the Thought of John Smyth,' *Baptist Quarterly*, Vol. 30 (January 1984): 199–203.

¹⁵⁹ Removing the opprobrium of historical influence from any claims of theological similarity frees the interpreter from either downplaying such similarities or ignoring them altogether. As noted above, it is a fallacy to infer a causal connection between two traditions on the basis of similarity of belief. But disengaging substantive continuity from causal continuity dispels the equally fallacious reasoning of supposing that dissimilarity of causality necessitates dissimilarity of belief.

¹⁶⁰ Brachlow, *The Communion of the Saints*, 155.

presents each of the theological parameters demarcating the boundaries of New England ecclesiology between roughly 1640 and 1740. Prominent among them are 'both parts of Calvin's doctrine, the church as a means of grace to everyone and the church as disciplined community' as well as the 'development of voluntarism ... conveyed to New England with the Puritan migration of the 1630s' and embodying 'a system of congregations, each with an explicit covenant and a ministry elected by the male lay members, who shared the power of the keys to decide cases of church discipline.'¹⁶¹ Subsequent innovations within this theological context, Hall argues, were the requirement of a public 'relation' of spiritual experiences for adult candidates to full membership and the stresses to the 'several-sided understanding of the church' caused by the New Lights.¹⁶² Hall then makes a powerful case that Edwards need not have changed his view. For '[h]e was not under pressure from a New Light faction in his congregation or from friends and colleagues in the ministry to purify the church; after having quelled the brief eruption of enthusiasm in Northampton, he was spared the turmoil that disrupted so many other parishes. Moreover,' Hall continues, 'as a Stoddardean he had found that he could generate seasons of spiritual excitement while also practicing a broad churchmanship.'¹⁶³ Edwards could have had his cake, then, and eaten it too, i.e., made adjustments to practice of this theory within the framework the members of his congregation would have recognized.¹⁶⁴ We must admit, with Hall, that those who 'misread Edwards as requiring the "highest degree of evidence" and not "credibility" ... misread him only slightly.'¹⁶⁵ When it comes to the explaining Edwards's intention to ease his conscience in a manner departing from established tradition, Hall's conclusion is that '[n]othing in the *Affections*, in the treatise of 1749 [the *Humble Inquiry*], or in the "Miscellanies" that surround them indicates directly why Edwards finally allowed his animus against hypocrisy to overcome the policy of charity.'¹⁶⁶ Hall can only hint that Edwards's more ultimate intention, the Skinnerian intentionality which is 'logically connected with it in the sense that it serves

¹⁶¹ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 20–21.

¹⁶² Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 21, 46.

¹⁶³ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 51–52.

¹⁶⁴ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 61.

¹⁶⁵ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 82.

¹⁶⁶ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 58–59.

to characterize its *point*,¹⁶⁷ is lost to us in the (at least presently) unreconstructable exigencies of Northampton politics.¹⁶⁸ Toward the end of the book I will venture a more definite, if more speculative, proposal as to why Edwards made this ecclesiastical change. Here, however, my only point is that the various features of the Puritan middle way, which Hall understands as well as any contemporary scholar can be said to understand it, has failed to provide the argumentative logic to make this choice meaningful. Though I do not entirely deny that Hall may be right about the irretrievability of the full context for Edwards's choice, the other option, that there is an intellectual context that can provide this logic, ought not to be dismissed preemptorily.

In assessing the place of ethical arguments in Edwards's ecclesiology, I will explore the confluence of perfectionistic ideas of discipleship Puritans shared with both Separatists and Anabaptists. The centrality of love within Anabaptism is reminiscent of the way the *practical syllogism* functions in certain Reformed thinkers in several respects.¹⁶⁹ Separatists, and some Puritans with them,¹⁷⁰ shared with Anabaptists much of the ideal of the church as an institution comprised of called saints.¹⁷¹ While avoidance of putatively un-Biblical modes of worship is

¹⁶⁷ Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas' *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History* 8, No. 1 (1969): 45, italics original.

¹⁶⁸ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 85; the connection with Skinner here is mine and not Hall's.

¹⁶⁹ William Estep insists that '[t]he undergirding motive of life for the Anabaptists was love' (Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 254). See also J. Lawrence Burkholder, 'The Anabaptist Vision of Discipleship,' in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender*, edited by Guy F. Herschberger (Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1957), 144–145.

¹⁷⁰ We would do well to heed David Loades's warning that 'those scholars who have recently explored the early history of religious dissidence in England have made their own task more difficult by not distinguishing with sufficient clarity between non-conformity, separatism and sectarianism' ('Anabaptism and English Sectarianism in the Mid-Sixteenth Century,' 63).

¹⁷¹ Sjouke Voolstra, "'The colony of heaven': The Anabaptist aspiration to be a church without spot or wrinkle in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,' in *From Martyr to Muppy, A Historical Introduction to Cultural Assimilation Processes of a Religious Minority in the Netherlands: The Mennonites*, ed. Hamilton, Voolstra, and Visse (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1994), 17. The Anabaptists' 'uncompromising ontological dualism[,] in which Christian values are held in sharp contrast to the values of the "world" in its corrupt state' (Friedmann, *Theology of Anabaptism*, 38; see also Friedmann, 'the Doctrine of the Two Worlds,' in *The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision*, ed. Herschberger, 105–118), reaches its most dramatic expression in the distinctive role granted to the 'suffering church' in the *Heilgeschichte* (See Franklin H. Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian*

not absent from the historical record,¹⁷² more pressing in Anabaptist dissent was maintaining a church that could offer the ‘mutual encouragement in the serious struggle against the powers of darkness’ made awkward by the same kind of persecutorial atmosphere suffered in England by those labeled ‘Puritans.’¹⁷³ Although they clearly took separation further than did either Puritans or Separatists, Anabaptists shared the view that discipline was a mark of the true church.¹⁷⁴ The simi-

Protestantism: A Study of the Anabaptist View of the Church [New York: MacMillan, 1964], 107, 132–134; Burkholder, ‘The Anabaptist Theology of Discipleship,’ 146.). ‘The Christ without sin who had suffered under the sinfulness of the world, but had remained obedient to God, asked to be followed by believers who would also suffer during their pilgrimage through life on earth’ (Voolkstra, ‘The colony of heaven,’ 17). On this general theme see also, Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1963), 1–32; Von Rohr, *The Shaping of American Congregationalism, 1620–1957* (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1986), 35–36, 94–99; and Estep, *The Anabaptist Story*, 241. Stephen Foster is also instructive here in his discussion of how non-separating American Congregationalists distinguished themselves from their separating counterparts during the 1620s (*The Long Argument: English Puritanism and the Shaping of New England* [Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1981], 154). By 1638, Foster claims, ‘...increasingly old and new Puritans adopted a de facto Separatism in their concept of the parochial system.’ (*ibid.*, 158).

¹⁷² Estep cites an admonition of Conrad Grebel to Müntzer as evidence of the fact that the Lord’s Supper was seen as part of church discipline from the very beginning of the Anabaptist movement: ‘...if one should be found who is not minded to live the brotherly life, he eats to his condemnation, for he does not discern the difference from another meal.’ (*The Anabaptist Story*, 248; the quotation is from J.C. Wenger, trans., *Conrad Grebel’s Programmatic Letters of 1524* [Scottsdale, Penn.: Herald Press, 1970], 21). The continuation of this passage beyond Estep’s quotation is illustrative of our first point of comparison between Anabaptism and English Separatism and Puritanism: ‘[h]e brings shame on the inward bond, which is love, and on the bread, which is the outward bond’ (*ibid.*, 21). Love is the inward bond of the fellowship of believers called to a difficult path of discipleship.

¹⁷³ Burkholder, ‘The Anabaptist Vision of Discipleship,’ 148; Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Visible Saints: The Congregational Way 1640–1660* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), 48. The saints ‘... are to show “affectionate sincere love” and “vigilant watchfulness over each others conversation”, “mutual to bear with each others infirmities” and “bearing each others Burthens”, with “frequent spiritual Communication for Edification” and “free Contribution, and communication of temporal things”’ (Nuttall, *Visible Saints*, 74; Nuttall is quoting from John Owen, *Eschol: ... Or, Rules of Direction, for the walking of the Saints in fellowship* [London, 1648]). Compare Edwards’s early sermon ‘Long-Suffering and Kindness,’ (*WJE* 8, 208).

¹⁷⁴ It was the principle that the full members of the church should be ‘visible saints’ which gave significance to the early English Congregationalists’ demand for ‘...separation from evill, from evill and sinfull wayes, and things, and persons, a separation from false worship, from Babels confusion, a separation of the precious from the vile, of the cleane from the uncleane’ (William Bartlet, *Ichograjia or a Model of The Primitive Congregational Way* [London, 1647]; quoted in Nuttall, *Visible Saints*, 53). The ‘ban’ implies in a negative or punitive form for Anabaptists what the Puritan idea of ‘visible

larities between Puritan-Separatist and Anabaptist eschatology become even more striking in the triumphalism with which each ultimately characterizes the 'suffering' church.¹⁷⁵ The disciple of Anabaptism was 'a heroic sufferer, a member of a race of heroes of the cross who follow Christ to the bitter end.'¹⁷⁶ Again, similarity of belief does not prove causal connection; and that is not my interest anyway. My interest is in what scholars have characterized as in bounds and out of bounds positions for Edwards *qua* Calvinist to have taken. For this more restricted aim, it sufficient to insist that it remains possible to admit broad areas of theological convergence between the English Reformation and continental Anabaptism without reducing one to a development of the other. Thomas Manton, for instance, whose commentary on James Edwards cites in the 'Miscellanies', regards a variety of trials necessary because even though human beings' ... have *divers lusts* ...' it remains the duty of the regenerate 'for the worlds sake ... to convince them by our constancy, that they may be *confirmed* in the *faith*, if *weak* and staggering, or *converted*, if altogether *uncalled*'¹⁷⁷ If the priority Puritans placed on high levels of virtue can be rejoined with Reformed 'orthodoxy' with a backward glance toward Bucer, then neither need it be disjoined by a sidelong glance at the Anabaptists.

sainthood' in classic congregationalism affirmed positively as a prerequisite for church membership (see Friedmann, *The Theology of Anabaptism*, 143–147).

¹⁷⁵ See Avihu Zakai, *Exile and Kingdom: History and apocalypse in the Puritan migration to America* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1963); and John R. Knott, "'A Suffering People": Bunyan and the Language of Martyrdom,' *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith*, ed. Francis J. Bremer (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1993), 88–123. What Cotton Mather 'saw in the unfolding saga of New England,' with all its trials and afflictions was nothing less than a 'miraculous' 'calling of an elect nation' for which '[t]he only historical precedent was Israel' (Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1986], 138). On biblical typology in Mather's writings see Sacvan Bercovitch, 'The Typology of America's Mission,' in *The American Jeremiad* (Madison, Wisc.: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 93–131; and Mason I. Lowance, Jr., 'Cotton Mather's Magnalia and the Metaphors of Biblical History,' in *Typology and Early American Literature*, edited by Sacvan Bercovitch (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1972), 139–160.

¹⁷⁶ Burkholder, 'The Anabaptist Vision of Discipleship,' 146. On the 'heroism' motif in Anabaptist thought see also, Ethelbert Stauffer, 'The Anabaptist Theology of Martyrdom,' trans. Robert Friedmann, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* XIX, No. 3 (July 1945): 199–201, 204.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas Manton, *A Practical Commentary: an exposition with notes on the epistle of James* (London, 1651), 16, 21; italics original.

Aristotelian and Neoplatonic Philosophies of Virtue

I have also found many helpful conceptual tools in the revival of interest in virtue as means of organizing the moral life witnessed in the last two decades in both moral philosophy and religious ethics. This scholarly trajectory is often categorized as ‘virtue ethics.’¹⁷⁸ While in some cases the further call of *sola fide* led to a de-emphasizing of the characterization the Christian life in terms of virtue (more the case with Luther than with Calvin or other Reformed thinkers), this is just one side of the debate that was the Reformation. The questions posed by the Christian virtue tradition were far from silenced by the Reformation; indeed, in many ways, the discussion within sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Reformed ethics continued to be cast in terms of the extent of freedom, the relationship between divine and human agency, the nature of church community, and the importance of understanding the Christian life in terms of virtue and virtues. Aristotle, Aquinas, and various classical statements as well as latter Christian appropriations of Neoplatonism were deeply engaged and positively valued by no lesser a defender of Puritan Reformed credentials than John Owen.¹⁷⁹ It only makes Edwards’s own views on these and other questions more difficult to pin down that, in the main, he did not engage texts directly in the manner Protestant scholastics emulating Renaissance humanists, but instead drew from the polemical literature of Owen, from encyclopedic glosses that embodied this method, and from the more homespun pietistic literature of the colonies that decidedly did not. Two categories drawn from this conglomeration of classical sources are most relevant: what I will call the *metaphysics of goodness* (via Christian Neoplatonism) and the *moral psychology of habit* (via Christian Aristotelianism).

¹⁷⁸ See Robert B. Kruschwitz and Robert C. Roberts, eds., *The Virtues: Contemporary Essays on Moral Character* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth, 1987); Peter A. French, Theodore E. Uehling, Jr., and Howard K. Wettstein, eds., *Ethical Theory: Character and Virtue*, *Midwest Studies in Philosophy*, Vol. 13 (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988); Lee H. Yearley, ‘Recent Work on Virtue,’ *Religious Studies Review* 16 (1990): 1–9; William C. Spohn, S.J., ‘The Return of Virtue Ethics,’ *Theological Studies* 53 (1992): 60–75; Linda Trinkhaus Zagzebski, *The Virtues of the Mind: An Inquiry into the Nature of Virtue and the Ethical Foundations of Knowledge* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Roger Crisp and Michael Slote, eds., *Virtue Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); and Rosalind Hursthouse, *On Virtue Ethics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

¹⁷⁹ Sebastian Rehnman, ‘John Owen: A Reformed Scholastic at Oxford,’ in *Reforma-*

The *metaphysics of goodness* connotes the description of the human person becoming more 'godlike' in becoming more virtuous. That moral goodness constitutes a kind of divinity is a view shared by both Plato and Plotinus.¹⁸⁰ Accounts of the precise connection between rationality, goodness, and happiness vary; but the legacy of this heritage in the medieval Christian context is the view that that goodness represented a fulfilled potentiality of the particular kind of being humans have.¹⁸¹ The concept of all goods *participating* in God's omnibenevolent nature is the classic expression of this idea in Christian thought. Aquinas, for instance, is careful to avoid the implications of equality with God by clarifying that '[I]keness of creatures to God is not affirmed on account of agreement in form according to the formality of the same genus or species, but solely according to analogy, inasmuch as God is essential being, whereas other things are beings by participation.'¹⁸² The ultimate realization of this nature, from the perspective of a Christianized *metaphysics of goodness* is the supernatural union with God after death, the beatific vision.¹⁸³ Degrees of this perfection were nevertheless thought to be achieved in this life through the conformity of the person with expressions of this ultimate *telos* in the love commandments and in the natural law. One of the prominent ways this philosophical idea is connected with scriptural narrative is with respect to the concept of infusion. Aquinas recommends the Platonic vocabulary in which Augustine was imbued in this respect: '[t]he Divine Essence Itself is charity, even as It is wisdom, and goodness. Wherefore just as we are said to be good with the goodness which is God, and wise with the wisdom which is God (since the goodness whereby we are formally good is a participation of Divine goodness ...), so too, the charity whereby formally we love our neighbor is a participation of Divine charity.'¹⁸⁴ If Edwards's broader soteriology is different, the formal structure of his reflections

tion and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise, ed. Van Asselt and Dekkar (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 185–200.

¹⁸⁰ On this topic see Julia Annas, *Platonic Ethics Old and New* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1999), 52–71.

¹⁸¹ Scott MacDonald, 'Later Medieval Ethics,' in *A History of Western Ethics*, ed. Becker and Becker, 56.

¹⁸² *Summa Theologica* [I, Q. 4, art. 3, rep. 3], trans. Fathers of the English Dominican province (New York: Benziger Brothers, 1947), 1:23.

¹⁸³ Paul Ramsey gives substantial consideration to the cognate term 'beatific vision' in Edwards's writings ('Appendix III: Heaven is a Progressive State,' *WJE* 8, 719–726).

¹⁸⁴ *Summa Theologica*, II–II, Q. 23, art. 2, ed. Benziger Brothers, 2: 1270–1271.

on God's ends in creating the world is relevantly similar.¹⁸⁵ It is the partaking of the divine nature that marks the justified as a sons or daughters of God and fits them to the inheritance of eternal life 'due by right of adoption.'¹⁸⁶ Such a correlation is perhaps what Henry More had in mind in citing Aristotle (*Nicomachean Ethics* Book 1, sec. 10) as a source for the conclusion that 'He ... who acts according to this Faculty [the boniform faculty], conforms to *the best and divinest thing that is in us*.'¹⁸⁷

If the *metaphysics of goodness* demarcates an ultimate state being pursued, what I call the *moral psychology of habit* concerns the issues surrounding how this state is to be attained as well as maintained against countervailing forces in the self. Some form of grace is definitely a part of this account for any Christian thinker. Human beings are thought to be unable without divine assistance to realize the fulfillment of their nature; but a variety of answers are given, using diverse features of the classical heritage, to more accurately and systematically express the intentions of scripture. Prior to any other seems to be the question of how this ultimate goodness is perceived as a *telos*, that is to say, as a good desirable to seek and achieve. The 'eudaemonistic nature' of all schools of classical ethics dictated that this state of goodness must create a happiness in the person who achieves it.¹⁸⁸ The human being in seeking morality seeks the enjoyment that stems from the fulfillment of human nature in some fashion. There was not any uniform answer to this question, of course, but according to Julia Annas, '*eudaimonia* at the very least connotes a satisfactory life about which the agent has positive feelings.'¹⁸⁹ The cultivation of knowledge subsequently went hand in hand with the cultivation of virtue. If vices are to be avoided and virtues developed, agents must not only know their own particular nature, but human nature more generally, the moral law, the mechanisms of reason, and the cause and effect relationship of choice and action to sensibilities and states of being. Also required is the skill of practical reasoning itself, acquired with experience under the direction of those already

¹⁸⁵ Fiering identifies Thomas Wright as one of the first English Neoplatonists writing in the vernacular. His early seventeenth-century work *Passions of the Minde in Generall*, Fiering observes, was included in the inventories of at least two private New England libraries as well as the Yale Library catalog of 1743 (*Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 155).

¹⁸⁶ *Summa Theologica*, I-II, Q 114, art. 3, ed. Benziger Brothers, 1: 1155.

¹⁸⁷ More, *Enchiridium Ethicum*, 7.

¹⁸⁸ Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 46.

¹⁸⁹ Annas, *The Morality of Happiness*, 330.

good. One can accumulate a broad range of theoretical knowledge and still not have the 'know how' of applying it to real-life situations in one's own case. It cannot be overstated that serious reflection on the nature of community followed this question from its original context in the ancient world through its appropriation for Christian purposes. For many Christian scholastics in the medieval period the discussion of the moral life went hand in hand with the rules and counsels of the monastic life—Benedict and Gregory the Great articulating some of the most forceful and systematic 'rules' thereof. Aquinas's discussion of fraternal correction, organized under the general heading of charity together with its effects (joy) and other expressions such as almsgiving, draws heavily on Aristotle's conception of practical wisdom as the master virtue determining the most appropriate manner of preserving the mean between vices that comprise all the other virtues.¹⁹⁰

In setting out these two wellsprings of the Christian virtue tradition separately, my intent has not been to keep them apart. Indeed, invoking a legacy as widespread as the influence of Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas, I would place Edwards's position in the tradition with Malebranche, Smith, Gale and other seventeenth- and eighteenth-century synthesizers of the Platonic and Aristotelian legacies in classical ethics.¹⁹¹ The distinctive demands placed on him by his particular place in intellectual history may well illuminate some distinctive facets of their synthesis, but Edwards was far from unique in correlating them. Commenting upon the interpenetration of Augustinianism, Aristotelianism, scholasticism and humanism in the writings of Puritan John Owen, Sebastian Rehnman notes that 'several strains of thought could and did serve in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as instruments for a renewed and refined syntheses of Christianity, in both its patristic and medieval versions, and classical thought.'¹⁹² Of the four preeminent exponents of (Aristotelian) scholastic ethics in the moral philosophy curriculum at seventeenth-century Harvard cited by Fiering, two are prominently influenced by Neoplatonic ideas as well. The Roman Catholic thinker Eustache de Saint-Paul, one of whose works on divinity was owned by Solomon Stoddard,¹⁹³ Fiering describes as 'one more conduit of Neoplatonic ideas to Massachusetts prior to the full blossom-

¹⁹⁰ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Q. 33.

¹⁹¹ Holifield, *Theology in America*, 117.

¹⁹² Sebastian Rehnman, 'John Owen: A Reformed Scholastic at Oxford,' 186.

¹⁹³ Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 79.

ing of the Platonic school at Cambridge University.¹⁹⁴ Fiering characterizes the Protestant Franco Burgersdyck as having ‘incorporated more Neoplatonic ideas than are apparent even in Eustache.’¹⁹⁵

The result of this confluence of the *metaphysics of goodness* and the *moral psychology of habit* is that the degrees of ascending participation in God’s nature are described as increased ‘ingrainedness’ of the habits of charity and other Christian virtues. Again Aquinas’s ‘middle position’ of synthesis is instructive. He devotes six questions in the treatise on the virtues to the nature of dispositions and their growth and decay in human action in general;¹⁹⁶ when he devotes himself to the explication of the theological virtues in particular, this analysis must be integrated with his view that their ultimate cause is God’s infusion of grace. Only incidentally attempted in connection with the virtue of faith,¹⁹⁷ when he gets to charity a great deal of attention is paid to the integration. Five questions are devoted to charity. Nine out of twelve articles of one of those questions are devoted in their entirety to how and why charity grows or declines. Here, scriptural sources share roughly equal time with Augustine. References to the *Nicomachean Ethics* are not excluded altogether, which shares a distant third place with Gregory the Great and Origen.¹⁹⁸ Especially noteworthy is the correlation of the importance of human activity within a broader denial that God grants charity according to the ‘capacity of natural gifts.’ Citing Colossians 1:12, Aquinas writes that ‘[t]he virtue in accordance with which God gives His gifts to each one, is a disposition or previous preparation or effort of the one who receives grace. But the Holy Ghost forestalls even this disposition or effort, by moving man’s mind either more or less, according as He will.’¹⁹⁹ Some human effort is granted as part of preparation for grace. But more charity is not categorically given to people who are morally better; for such an affirmation would suggest that human beings caused the infusing of the Spirit through their own autonomous efforts. Each of the Cambridge Platonists, it was noted

¹⁹⁴ Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 85 n44.

¹⁹⁵ Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 86.

¹⁹⁶ *Summa Theologica*, I–II, Q. 49–54.

¹⁹⁷ While affirming that faith is infused into human beings by God, for example, Aquinas does acknowledge that science, the application of intellect and understanding ‘begets and nourishes faith, by way of external persuasion’ (*Summa Theologica*, II–II, Q. 6, art. 1, rep. 1, ed. Benziger Brothers, 2: 1201).

¹⁹⁸ Pope Leo’s sermon on the passion gets only one reference.

¹⁹⁹ *Summa Theologica*, II–II, Q. 24, art. 3, rep. 1, ed. Benziger Brothers ed., 2: 1277.

above, to some degree incorporate these two elements in his characterization of the regenerate state. Closer to Edwards's own intellectual world, the idea that the increased 'ingrainedness' of the habits of charity and other Christian virtues mark degrees of ascending participation in God's nature is prominently expressed in Part IV. of Gale's *Court of the Gentiles*. '[V]irtuose exercises frequently repeted breed a divine spiritual custome,' Gale observes, 'which is attended with divine suavitie and delight. The frequent repetition of the same exercise makes it more facile, dexterous and sweet.... The purest and strongest pleasures are such as attend the Souls actual adhesion to its first cause and last end: for the nearer things come to their first Principles, the more joyful and free they are: and what brings the Soul nearer its first Principe than virtuose Acts?'²⁰⁰ The more stable enjoyment of virtue is—in other words the more habitual virtue is—the greater ingrainings of the divine nature emanated out to the creature by means of the Holy Spirit.

A Summary of the Argument

Using primarily the *Two Dissertations* and the *Religious Affections*, the focus of Chapter 1 is Edwards's assessment that the persistent practice of Christian love is the principal means of securing assurance of salvation. Only charity's habitual nature reveals whether the seeds of redemption have been sown in the heart, he argues, because only a person's habits elicit what is foundationally desired and willed. Granting virtue such a priority has some obvious connections with the concept of the fully developed 'moral sense' of the sentimentalists; and Edwards's connection thereto is well documented by previous studies. What has not been documented is how Edwards's ethics is concurrently influenced by Reformed scholasticism. En route to making this case, I review several prominent Reformed theorists who made virtues and habits a substantive component of inferring the reality of justification from the effects of sanctification, i.e., the practical syllogism. Only by liberating Edwards from the a-historical confines of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Protestant prejudices against scholasticism, can the full range and depth of his conception of virtue be captured. Following this, Edwards's conception of the fixedness of the habit of charity can be

²⁰⁰ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 101.

shown to be what allows him to distinguish truly religious affections from unregenerate affections that do not express a permanent transformation. The concept of loving virtue for its own sake, extremely common in the history of Christian appropriations of Aristotle, may then also be fully appreciated as the foundation of the qualitative distinction between the scope of benevolence achievable by true saints and the various counterfeits open to the unregenerate.

Edwards's primary identification as a Calvinist thinker has also led to a diminution of his conception of virtue in connection with the doctrine of imputed righteousness. What identifies persons as saints, in the latter view, is God's calling them such; any supposed actions putative saints might have taken or traits they might have cultivated are of secondary concern. Having insisted in the *Religious Affections* that what distinguished true virtue from antinomian enthusiasm was habitual sanctified virtue, Edwards subsequently needed to distinguish himself on the Arminian front from moral sense philosophers and Deists. He does this primarily through the Neoplatonic metaphysics of emanation appropriated from the Cambridge Platonists: those who are able to habitually manifest a love of God and neighbor for their own sake are definitionally possessed of the Holy Spirit's indwelling. I establish in Chapter 2 that for Edwards the locus of God's regenerative activity increasingly became the communication of God's own loving nature to the actual ethico-religious make-up of the human person. I call this movement to a more 'inherent' conception of Christian righteousness as an expansion of the 'tenancy' of the Holy Spirit. Only if the Holy Spirit is allowed to inhere within the saint as a 'new principle of life' could Edwards avoid the objection that he has made human works the condition of salvation. With the stipulation that the basis for regenerate virtue is the divine nature itself he is, moreover, free to ratchet up the moral requirements of salvation without activating concerns about 'works righteousness.' If Calvin worried that relying on works of charity as a source of assurance of salvation would readily slide into 'works righteousness,' I argue that Edwards found it impossible to imagine saints without high levels of virtue.

Chapter 3 takes up a different segment of the question over whether Christian virtue is imputed or inherent than is discussed in Chapter 2. At issue here is the agency behind the power of the habit of charity. In the case of the 'antinomian' program of immediate revelation, the agency behind the habit's power was thought to reside outside of the person to such an extent that the Holy Spirit could not confidently

be connected to the moral qualities of human recipients. In considering the development of thought from Edwards's early 'antinomian' sermons and pre-1746 treatises on the revivals, I document in this chapter an insistence upon the dignity of the human person increasingly in tension with such stringent conceptions of irresistible grace. With the composition of the *Religious Affections*, I argue that Edwards determinately turns to a substantive view of secondary causality, a scholastic term connoting a type of power that a thing has both within itself and has applied to it from the outside. Although the primary cause of the process of regeneration will remain in God's nature, I argue that Edwards regards the Holy Spirit as bringing the salvific 'cure' to the soul in a manner that simultaneously requires the human will's own power. This is not an autonomous act of will, but a condition that is conjointly provided by the human in the broader redemptive act of God. I therefore felt it appropriate to call the development of Edwards's views in this area a respect for the *integrity* of secondary causes. Even a quasi-autonomous conception of human agency, however, moves Edwards outside of the orbit of the divine determinism and/or Malebranchian occasionalism many scholars still see as inescapable in his Calvinist heritage.

Although it cannot be so dramatic as to allow agents to bridge the gap between reprobate and regenerate sensibilities unaided by God, I argue in Chapter 4 that the conception of freedom remaining to the regenerate person in whom the Holy Spirit indwells is commensurate, albeit with considerably less scope, with the central capacity Aristotle grants adult agents to govern their own course of self-cultivation. The standard reading on this point has been that Edwards allows a degree of freedom only slightly divergent from a thoroughgoing determinism. I push the envelope of this assumption by suggesting that even when the highly circumscribed view of freedom that obtains when its co-dependence with infused grace is weighed in, charity cannot be differentiated from any other habit requiring the continual actualization of human freedom for its maintenance. The recognition of the possibility of losing virtue, inert when considered within the context of the standard Reformed determinism, will continue to create a doctrinal compound increasingly discordant with Calvin and the Westminster Confession when added to Edwards's sanctification-based conception of regeneration in subsequent chapters. However much theological dissonance is created with the Reformed heritage, and even if it may be impossible for the saint to *actually* do so, *philosophically*, very little guar-

antees the maintenance of the habit of charity beyond the original gift of grace in conversion, the resultant force of habit itself, and the limited freedom of human agency that contingently stands behind it. *Freedom of the Will* is the principal text used in this chapter to form the foundation for later fine-tuning of this point.

While a construal of perseverance as justification vouchsafed by divine decree and instantiated by the imputation of righteousness is often assumed in Edwards as his indubitable legacy from the Calvinist tradition, I argue in Chapter 5 that his views on this topic are no more straightforward than his views on the degree of virtue implicit in regeneration, the nature of Christian righteousness, or the extent of human freedom. I shall not desist in this chapter from admitting the inconclusiveness of Edwards's views on any discrete theological topic when disconnected from an integrated narrative of the development of broader swathes of his thought. I will, however, begin to claim support for a more determinate reading of Edwards's ethical position based on the logic which connects the broad Edwardsean themes documented in the previous four chapters. The second through the fifth sections of the chapter are structured by the consideration of four of the most prominent Reformed options on the perseverance of the saints Edwards might have adopted. All four types will be admitted to command a modicum of support from various places in the corpus, but globally adopting any of them creates too much cognitive dissonance with the incontrovertible mainlines of Edwards's desire to maintain a minimal degree of moral freedom and a minimal degree of moral autonomy vis-à-vis secondary causality. The sixth section of the chapter considers the early sermon-discourse 'Justification By Faith Alone' and the posthumously published 'Treatise on Grace.' I will there demonstrate that qualifications made in texts routinely cited to demonstrate the impeccability of Edwards's Calvinist credentials also embody a more substantial conception of secondary causality than can be accommodated even by the fourth and most plausible apology for a narrow Calvinist reading. The penultimate section of the chapter notices how the development of 'Miscellanies' entries on perseverance seem to indicate a shift from an earlier and more narrow Calvinist view to a broader view more consistent with the 'logic of virtue' that begins to be consolidated in later entries. The final section of the chapter offers a provisional sketch of a fifth type of view on perseverance—more common in seventeenth-century Reformed thought than in the American Calvinist options with which many interpreters of Edwards are more familiar—in which

his Calvinism and the Aristotelian-Neoplatonic philosophy of virtue he adapted blend more naturally and more substantially. Aside from embarrassing the ease with which some scholars still assume Edwards's straightforward orthodoxy along narrow lines, my more deliberate aim is to use this opportunity to highlight the privileging of texts and ideas that either forthrightly or uncritically stand behind any comprehensive assessment of Edwards's ethics.

In the chapters preceding Chapter 6, I seek to document how those features of the Aristotelian-Neoplatonic virtue tradition latent in Protestant scholasticism and corroborated by shared features within the radical wing of the English Reformation could reinforce one another in Edwards's particular place at the nexus of intersecting theological trajectories. These overtones, I will argue, effected an amplification of the logic of virtue that infringed upon whatever Calvinist scruples Edwards may have had about ethico-religious freedom, supererogation, and perfectionistic notions of community. Edwards is widely, and I believe correctly, interpreted as promulgating a substantial restriction of access to full church membership than was practiced either by his predecessors or his contemporaries. *Life of Brainerd* is also widely regarded as the most extended case study of the post-conversion search for assurance of salvation in the Edwardsean corpus. But that Edwards became engaged with David Brainerd's diaries while solidifying his first book-length response to the 'communion controversy' is a connection missed or side-stepped by most commentators on both texts. Chapter 6 continues the amplification of the logic of virtue begun in previous chapters by correlating prudential reasoning with a need for a certain kind of church community. Read against the background of *Life of Brainerd*, the ecclesiastical writings present a corroborating picture of Edwards's concerns about community helping or hindering the processes whereby regenerate persons secure and maintain assurance of salvation.

The Conclusion distinguishes the use of the methods of history and theology to forward a primarily philosophical pursuit of Edwards's ethical position from similar endeavors that are more exclusively historical or theological in approach. This book involves historical analysis to the extent that teasing out what Edwards thought about ethics requires the deliberate effort to restore the pastness of the past against the grain of those studies that seek to maximize its relevance for contemporary theology and ethics. But my primary intent in bringing this out is not to highlight the historical distinctiveness of Edwards's position. Indeed, along the way I shall note many Reformed and non-Reformed thinkers

who held something like Edwards's view. This book also engages theology to the extent that assumptions about what constitutes 'Calvinist orthodoxy' routinely stand behind interpretive points at issue in scholarly work on Edwards. But I do not see myself as contributing to a discussion of to what extent Edwards's views on the relationship between justification and sanctification are theologically orthodox. As noted throughout the preceding chapters, determining what set of texts and genres constitutes the core of one's reading of Edwards determines how ambiguous passages and conflicts between texts and genres are resolved. It therefore seems appropriate to include an account of what has been my hermeneutics in making these assessments. The 'Miscellanies' notebooks Edwards kept privately throughout his adult life are a particularly helpful resource for assessing the development of Edwards's thought. The significant references to the doctrine of justification by faith and the perseverance of the saints must be taken very seriously. A patterned shift can, however, be made out wherein the 'justification by faith stream' that permeates the early writings gradually gives way to the 'holiness stream' more characteristic of the *Religious Affections* and *Two Dissertations*. As the mid-career through the mature entries unfold, I argue that his discussions of justification by faith move from affirming that faith alone justifies to denying that faith can ever be separated from works in those whom God grants salvation. Another topic in the 'Miscellanies' I pursue at length is Edwards's discussion of 'humiliation' within the regeneration process. A commensurate shift can be made out here from a denial that any 'preparation' is necessary given the freeness of God's grace to an affirmation of the 'meetness' of God's usually granting faith only to those who have repented. His discussion of the perseverance of the saints, in turn, moves from asserting that it is granted in the gift of faith itself to a denial that it violates binding formulations of the doctrine to require saints to stay above the threshold of virtue beneath which one cannot ordinarily infer assurance of salvation. I conclude this final chapter by enumerating the benefits beyond Edwards studies that recommend a book so focused on the intricacies of Edwardsean virtue.

CHAPTER ONE

THE UBIQUITY OF THE PRACTICAL SYLLOGISM

Christian Practice as the 'Sign of Signs'

Using primarily the *Two Dissertations* and the *Religious Affections*, the focus of this chapter is Edwards's assessment that the persistent practice of Christian love is the principal means of securing assurance of salvation. 'Christian practice is the sign of signs ... which confirms and crowns all other signs of godliness.'¹ Edwards is quite precise in affirming that expressions of supernatural charity can be distinguished from its many natural semblances by its unique motive structure. Only charity's habitual nature, moreover, reveals that the seeds of redemption have been sown in the heart because only a person's habits elicit what is foundationally desired and willed. I am far from alone in noticing these points. Granting virtue such a priority has some obvious connections with the concept of the fully developed 'moral sense' of the sentimentalists, for instance; and Edwards's connection thereto is well documented by previous studies.² But although both the degree of virtue achievable and the consistency of expression must be moderated by the overarching doctrines of innate depravity and imputed righteousness, so is Edwards's conception of the practical syllogism (inferring assurance of salvation on the basis of habitual charity) readily conformable to classic Reformed statements of the unbreakable connection between justification and sanctification. I nevertheless hope that walking through this well-traveled ground I can begin to highlight the many subtly different Reformed options and unanswered interpretive questions regarding what it is *about* virtue that makes it one of the most reliable indicators of salvation. These questions, I will venture to demonstrate, hide just beneath the surface of the vocabulary of virtue used both by scholars

¹ *WJE* 2, 444. See also Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1966), 143–145.

² See my review on the scholarly literature on Edwards's ethics in the Introduction.

who emphasize Edwards's indebtedness to moral sense theory and by those who rely more heavily on the Calvinist tradition.

I said in the Introduction that approaching what Edwards meant by virtue as an open question is a difficult thing to do. This is not the case because there is no heritage of caring about virtue or 'works' in the Reformed tradition. Indeed, there is a substantial heritage. Far from destroying the impetus for moral attainments, as anti-predestinarians argued, classic sixteenth- and seventeenth-century statements of Reformed doctrine routinely encompass a baseline affirmation that good works are part of God's plan for the elect.³ Calvin, for instance, allows the proper use of good works as a support for assurance of salvation, albeit in a manner secondary to the primary assurance of faith itself.⁴ In rebutting Osiander on the relationship between justification and sanctification, for instance, he affirms that Christ cannot be broken into pieces by separating the two.⁵ Nor, 'in urging men to perfection,' does Calvin give the elect a *carte blanche* to '... toil slowly or listlessly, much less give up.'⁶ '[S]ince they [the saints] take the fruits of regeneration as proof of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit,' he writes, 'from this they are greatly strengthened to wait for God's help in all their necessities'⁷ The good works of sanctification are a means of expressing the gratitude of the elect for the gift of eternal life and for being free from the guilt and despair to which the unregenerate are subject.⁸ Although

³ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, III, xiv, 9; *Institutes*, III, xix, 2. Calvin affirms the connection between justification and sanctification in his concept of grace as offered in these simultaneous but distinguishable gifts (*Institutes* III, xi, 1; *Institutes* III, xvi, 1; *Institutes* III, iii, 1; *Institutes* III, ii, 8). This idea denotes that the grace of sanctification is bestowed at the same time as the grace of justification in the gift of faith. Although Calvin represents the grace of sanctification as real righteousness (rather than imputed) (*Institutes* III, iii, 1), the idea of faith as a 'double gift' is not at odds with Calvin's general doctrines of imputed righteousness and justification by faith. First, while the righteousness given with faith is actual, it is not complete. It must grow gradually through the sanctified person's life (*Institutes* III, ii, 24). Second, even though this actual righteousness grows in the sanctified person day by day, it can neither (antecedently) warrant justification (which was already given) nor could it in any case (consequently) achieve levels commensurate with a sanctification worthy of justification. Even those levels of actual righteousness the sanctified can achieve through Christ's indwelling communion still elicit good works that are highly blemished (*Institutes* III, ii, 25).

⁴ *Institutes*, III, iii, 18.

⁵ *Institutes*, III, xi, 6.

⁶ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles, 2 Vols. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960), 1034 (*Institutes*, IV, i, 20).

⁷ *Institutes* III, xiv, 19; McNeill, ed., 786.

⁸ *Westminster Confession*, sections 16.2, 17.4, 18.4. Calvin asserts that even prior to their

there is perhaps a greater urgency about the role of good works as expressive of justification,⁹ Martin Bucer was certainly no different than Calvin in thinking that ‘... justification and sanctification are to be seen as two simultaneous “movements” in, or complementary aspects of, a single process of spiritual regeneration.’¹⁰ Love, for Bucer, ‘expresses the total intention of God for man, for love is the fulfilling of the law.’¹¹ The Westminster Confession takes this duty so far as to suppose that those who ‘... grow negligent, as if they were not bound to perform any duty unless upon a special motion of the Spirit’ are casting some doubt on their justification.¹²

The modicum of holiness to which the elect are predestined varies, then, from a high degree to a small degree of actual virtue.¹³ But

effectual calling, the elect are protected by God from ‘rushing headlong into the final ruin of death’ or ‘desperate impiety’ (*Institutes*, III, xxiv, 10; McNeill, ed., 976). See also Heinrich Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics: Set Out and Illustrated from the Sources*, rev. and ed. Ernst Bizer, trans. G.T. Thomson (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1950), 569–570, pt. 7.

⁹ Alister E. McGrath, *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 221–222. I believe McGrath takes this point to too great an extreme when he states that ‘[t]he strength of Calvin’s understanding of justification thus becomes apparent, in that it is evident that justification is now conceived *Christologically*, thus permitting the essentially moral conception of justification associated with Zwingli and Bucer to be discarded’ (*ibid.*, 224; italics original).

¹⁰ Bernard M.G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation*, 2nd edition (New York: Longman, 1995), 141. This judgment is based on Bucer’s commentary on Romans. Bucer and Calvin share, in other words, the view that some degree of sanctification is given at the same time as, and together with, the grace of justification.

¹¹ W.P. Stephens, *The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 91. Bucer ‘... rejects any idea that there can be true love without true faith leading to it,’ notes Stephens, ‘but his frequent concern is to insist on the love that springs of necessity from genuine faith’ (*The Holy Spirit in the Theology of Martin Bucer*, 65).

¹² *Westminster Confession* (16.3), in Robert Shaw, *An Exposition of the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1846), 191.

¹³ *Institutes* III, xxiii, 12; *WC*, 13.1. Heinrich Heppe includes a passage in his influential compendium of Reformed thought from Johannes Cocceius (1603–1669) which implies a primarily forensic conception of sanctification, i.e., where justification’s freeing a person from the consequences of sin frees one from the law in a more general way (*Summa Doctrinae de Foedere et Testamento Dei*, in *Opera* [Amsterdam, (1648) 1673], Tom. VI, xv, 542; cited in Heppe, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 567, pt. 3). A passage from the ‘Leiden Synopsis,’ in contrast, advocates a conception of sanctification embodying cooperative grace after justification (*Doctorem et Professorum in Academia Leidensi Joh. Polyandi, Andr. Riveti, Ant. Walaei et Ant. Thyssi Synopsis purioris Theologiae*, editio sexta [Leiden, (1581) 1652], XXXII, 18; cited in Heppe, 568–569, pt. 6).

regardless of degree, any univocal rejection of human participation or cooperation in the *ordo salutis* as tantamount to heterodox ‘works righteousness’ must be said to be at odds with an appreciation for the full breadth of what was acceptable to sixteenth-century Reformed theologians and the seventeenth-century thinkers who made use of them. The language of habits implicit in early modern faculty psychology is part of this wide-ranging discourse. Richard A. Muller helpfully reminds us that while ‘the Reformers disparage the language of *habitus gratiae* or disposition of grace because of the semi-Pelagian connotations given it by the teachers of the late Middle Ages,’ they nevertheless ‘... make no attempt to counter the assumption that the subjective reception of a particular form of knowledge ... should be understood in terms of an inward *habitus sciendi theologiae*, and the notion of inward faculties and their dispositions is a basic assumption of their discussions of the human psyche.’¹⁴ By taking this aspect of faculty psychology ‘for granted and ... not a matter of debate,’ they assume that ‘faith resides in the mind’ as a disposition or habit in a number of different possible ways: ‘innate or inborn (*habitus insita*), belonging to the nature of the mind or will; acquired (*habitus acquisita*) by an activity of the mind or will in relation to something external; or infused (*habitus infusa*) by the activity of some thing or power external to the mind or will.’¹⁵ Whereas Muller denies that either Reformers or seventeenth-century Reformed ‘orthodox’ thinkers allowed that ‘grace is a habit infused into the sinner’ but rather a ‘power of God which never becomes a property or predicate of human nature,’ however, Edwards and other Puritans made broader and more substantive use of the concept of infused habits.¹⁶ American Puritans shared with Calvin the necessity of grace to direct the human will to the good in maintaining virtue’s instrumentality in the *ordo salutis*;¹⁷ but this certainly does not prevent them from supposing that making one’s calling and election secure requires ‘[g]iving all diligence to grow in grace, by adding to faith, virtue, etc.’¹⁸ A particularly prominent ethical thrust is worth singling out in several texts from among the list of major sources which, whether Edwards actually

¹⁴ Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodox, ca. 1520–1725*, Vol. 1, *Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 355.

¹⁵ Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, 2nd edition, 356, 357.

¹⁶ Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, 2nd edition, 358.

¹⁷ Calvin, *Institutes*, II, iv, 14.

¹⁸ *WJE* 2, 196.

read them or not, can be presumed to have influenced his education or formed at least some of the raw materials from which he developed his own position.

Among English Puritans, Richard Baxter is well known for his 'moderate' resistance to forms of Calvinism.¹⁹ Baxter advocated a range of theocentric conceptions of the Christian life that emphasized holiness as a subsequent condition to the first bestowal of faith and the imputation of righteousness. He concludes the preface of his 1671 work *How Far Holiness is the Design of Christianity*, by observing that 'undoubtedly Holiness is the life and beauty of the soul,' that '[t]he Spirit of Holiness is Christs Agent to do his work in us, and our pledge and earnest and first fruit of Heaven,' and that '[o]ur Holiness is our love of God who is most Holy: And our love of God, and Reception of his love, is our Heaven and everlasting Happiness....'²⁰ In his 1679 work *Imputative Righteousness Truly Stated*, he insists, without denying the imputation of righteousness in the first act of faith, '[t]hat Christ was not our Delegate and Instrument sent by us to do this in our stead, as a man payeth his debt by a Servant whom he sendeth with the money.'²¹ Again, presumably the first faith is received irresistibly in a freely bestowed gift of grace; but subsequent to that, the regenerate cannot hope by imputation to escape the 'threatning [of] non-liberation, and a far sorer punishment, to all that unbelievingly and unthankfully reject it.'²² Rather than receiving justification once and for all in the first act of faith, then, the Christian life is more constantly in flux. The regenerate indeed receive 'a Gift of Christ with Pardon and Life; but only on Condition that we thankfully and believingly accept the Gift.'²³ Baxter does not deny that there is such a thing as constant perseverance in faith without constant assur-

¹⁹ Micheal R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978), 377; Geoffrey Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: A Study in a Tradition*, Friends of Dr. Williams's Library, Fifth Lecture (London: Geoffrey Cumberledge; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951).

²⁰ Richard Baxter, *How Far Holiness is the Design of Christianity. Where the Nature of Holiness and Morality is opened, and the Doctrine of Justification, Imputation of Sin and Righteousness, &c partly cleared, and Vindicated from Abuse. In certain Propositions, returned to an unknown Person, referring to Mr. Fowlers Treatise on this Subject* ([London?]: For Nevill Simmons, 1671), 21; italics original.

²¹ Richard Baxter, *Imputative Righteousness Truly Stated, According to the TENOUR of the GOSPEL: Manifesting, In what Sence sound PROTESTANTS hold it: And in what Sence LIBERTINES pervert it* (London: 1679), preface A7.

²² Baxter, *Imputative Righteousness Truly Stated*, preface A8.

²³ Baxter, *Imputative Righteousness Truly Stated*, preface A7-A8; italics original.

ance of salvation.²⁴ But he does insist '[t]hat no Elect Person is Justified or Righteous by Imputation while he is an Infidel or Ungodly'²⁵ Accordingly, when a heretofore faithful Christian sins, salvation can be put into doubt. God's 'Testament or Covenant-Gift,' he states, '... doth, besides the Conditions of our first Right, impose on us Continuance in the Faith, with sincere Holiness, as the necessary Condition of our continued Justification, and our actual Glorification.'²⁶ Baxter would of course have been known by Edwards in some fashion. He might even have been influential as an exemplar of the critique of antinomianism.²⁷ Geoffrey Nuttall further suggests that 'the piety ... to which Baxter devoted his life' was infused into eighteenth-century dissent by Phillip Doddridge, a figure Edwards knew and respected.²⁸

How virtuous the saints must be was no less crucial an issue for William Perkins. His widely read *Cases of Conscience* moves quickly to a consideration of the various forms of religious distress and how strategies for gaining assurance of salvation could be employed to remedy them. But before he gets there, the several preparatory matters he considers are instructive. Immediately following the dedication of the work and the laying out of its structure, Perkins treats the question of confession and the degrees of goodness. Chapter 2 is an analysis of the various levels of sin. Chapter 3 considers the powers of conscience just before Chapter 4 invokes 'cases' or casuistry as a productive discursive method for uncovering the theological problems that cause spiritual distress. Chapter 5 begins the inquiry into '*What a man must do that he may come into Gods favour, and be saved*'?²⁹ Humbling oneself, faith in Christ, and 'new-obedience' are the three factors Perkins identifies and he devotes Chapter 6 to probing how assurance of salvation can

²⁴ Richard Baxter, *The Right Method For a Settled Peace of Conscience And Spiritual Comfort*, in *Select Practical Writings of Richard Baxter, With Life of the Author*, ed. Leonard Bacon (New Haven: Durrie & Peck, 1833), Vol. 1, 366–367; N.H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 84.

²⁵ Baxter, *Imputative Righteousness Truly Stated*, preface A7.

²⁶ Baxter, *Imputative Righteousness Truly Stated*, preface A8.

²⁷ Watts, *The Dissenters*, 293–294, 376–377. On the slipperiness of Baxter's invocation of 'antinomianism,' see Tim Cooper, *Fear and Polemic in Seventeenth-Century England: Richard Baxter and Antinomianism* (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2001).

²⁸ Nuttall, *Richard Baxter and Philip Doddridge: A Study in a Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1951), 4–5; George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 366.

²⁹ This quote is from the table of contents of Perkins's *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience, Distinguished into Three Books* (Cambridge, 1606). The archaic 'u's have been substituted with a 'v's.

be garnered with respect to them. The remaining chapters of Book I of the work are then devoted to the various forms of distress that arise in the search for assurance of salvation. My point in mentioning Perkins's ordering of his subject matter is to highlight the integral way degrees of virtue were interwoven into the fabric of assurance and doubt in this classic Puritan text.

Gisbert Voetius, a leading Dutch critic of the Remonstrants, praised William Perkins in his defense of the practical applicability of Reformed theology against the charge of being 'arid and speculatively sterile.'³⁰ Among continental Reformed polemicists of the seventeenth century, Voetius is among the most rigorous ethicists in defending the 'precisionism' for which Puritans were criticized not only by Anglicans but by some co-religionists. The term refers, Voetius notes, to 'the reformation of life and manners, private and public, down to the smallest claim of the flesh'³¹ There is more than a hint of ethical elitism in his subsequent stipulation that the 'precise' Christian 'stays away from, those activities which common and easygoing Christians do not consider wrong' as well as '[t]he establishment, observance, and sincere use of both private fraternal correction ... and ecclesiastical censure'³² Voetius felt the need to respond to the charge that such rigorous discipline was tantamount to 'Brownism,' 'Donatism,' and/or Anabaptism. Citing the exhortation to Christian perfection (e.g., Phil. 3:15–17; Matt. 5:48; 1 Thess. 5:10), he insists that 'it is our duty ... to oblige both preachers to teach it, and members of the congregation to acknowledge their obligation and work at it; and when they see that they cannot perform it, to think and act as the [Heidelberg] Catechism soundly teaches, on the basis of Scripture, in Question 115.'³³ The exhortation "'[b]e not righteous overmuch" (Eccles. 7:16),' he qualifies, applies only to 'the deeds and conditions of others whom we see to be afflicted by God.'³⁴ Equally significant for the purposes of appreciating the full breadth of Reformed views on how virtuous Christians ought to be is Voetius's claim that 'their first ecclesiastical constitutions, the

³⁰ Gisbert Voetius, 'Concerning Practical Theology,' in *Reformed Dogmatic: J. Wollebius, G. Voetius, F. Turretin*, ed. and trans. John W. Beardslee III (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 269.

³¹ Voetius, 'Concerning Precision,' 323.

³² Voetius, 'Concerning Precision,' 323.

³³ Voetius, 'Concerning Precision,' 329.

³⁴ Voetius, 'Concerning Precision,' 330.

practice and decrees of synods, and the leading writers' demonstrate that 'the first reformers, and the first Reformed churches, especially in France, Holland, etc., wanted, desired, and sought precision in the matter of reformation in doctrine, polity, discipline, ceremonies, and morals for the reborn on every occasion, although they were not always able to secure it.'³⁵

The English Jansenist, Theophilus Gale, may also be cited as among those sources in Edwards's complex intellectual heritage that advocated a closer relationship between virtue and salvation than is generally assumed possible vis-à-vis neo-orthodox and evangelical framings of Calvinism. The aim of Part IV of Gale's massive *Court of the Gentiles* is a complex balance between regarding all of the pagan writers as espousing 'natural,' or in any case non-Christian, virtues and the improper use of insufficiently 'supernatural' philosophy undertaken by various 'schoolmen.' In 'reforming' philosophy, Gale does not wish to replace philosophy as an important handmaiden to theology but only to inform the proper use of proper sources to make proper theological and ecclesiastical points. To the extent that Gale trims the sails of his love of Aristotelian and Platonic ethics at all, he does so not by insisting that virtue cannot be the focus of the Christian life in the same way for Protestants as for pagans and the schoolmen but by insisting that the best of the pagans and the schoolmen understood that true virtue is impossible without God as its ultimate bestower.³⁶ 'So great was the modestie of this poor Philosopher,' observed Gale about Socrates as depicted in the *Theatetus*, that the manner in which 'he ascribeth the principal effieience of al moral virtue to God' could be described as 'beyond many that professe Christianitie.'³⁷ Interestingly, Gale cited Aristotle and Aquinas no less liberally and positively than Plato, who at least rhetorically stands in greater esteem in this treatise about where theology went wrong. Citing (within one paragraph) the *Phaedrus*, Cicero, the *Philebus*, Aristotle singly, the Delphic Inscription, Seneca, Plato and Aristotle conjointly, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil, and Chrysostom, Gale moves from defining the 'forme' of the human soul to be 'the spiritouse active Principe,' to locating the 'Beautie' of

³⁵ Voetius, 'Concerning Precision,' 332–333.

³⁶ Theophilus Gale, *The Court of the Gentiles. Part IV Of Reformed Philosophie. Wherein Plato's Moral, and Metaphysic of Prime Philosophie is reduced to an useful Forme and Method* (London: Printed by J. Macocke, for Thomas Cockeril, 1677), 91.

³⁷ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 398.

such 'in the predominance of virtuous habits,' to extolling virtue as the chief beauty, to eulogizing this beauty as divine, to affirming this divine beauty as paradigmatic of God's perfect nature, to stipulating a syllogism forcefully connecting virtue to the emanations of divine nature.³⁸ Beyond his extensive invocation of scholastic sources, this text is also interesting to us because Gale did not separate 'true moral virtue' as an emanation of the divine nature from matters of salvation. Instead, 'true moral virtue' is closely associated with '*a forme of divine life*' in his justification of the human inability to prepare for grace.³⁹ In expositing 1 Cor. 9: 24 and Phil. 3:12, he suggests that 'the Apostle seems to allude to such as ran in the Race, who, when they came to the end thereof, laid hold on the ... Crown on the top of the Goal. Thus Christians, by virtuose exercices, lay hold on eternal life, as the Crown at the end of their Race.'⁴⁰ It would not, perhaps, be overstating the case that such a notion in places rises to a kind of perfectionism. Citing 'a great Saying of the Platonists' together with Psalm 119: 96, 165, those with the liberty created by the divine bestowal of highly habitual virtue 'shal walke in the Kings high-way, according to the royal Law of Libertie, with al manner of libertie and boldnesse.... Such is the amplitude and magnitude of the Soul in al the exercises of Virtue'⁴¹

The *Enchiridion Ethicum* of Henry More formed a cornerstone of the moral philosophy curriculum at Harvard from the 1680s to about 1730.⁴² It began to be used at Edwards's own Yale College, where the 'new philosophy' did not phase out scholastic textbooks at the same pace, as early as in the 1720s.⁴³ Norman Fiering suggests that Edwards was probably familiar with More's writings in the early 1730s when 'distinguishing between natural conscience and the moral perceptions of the regenerate.'⁴⁴ For More, 'howbeit those three Names, which among Men so often occur, of *Virtue*, *Grace*, and *the Divine Life*, may

³⁸ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 84–85.

³⁹ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 153.

⁴⁰ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 107.

⁴¹ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 103.

⁴² Norman Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published by the University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1981), 64, 251.

⁴³ Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Harvard*, 252.

⁴⁴ Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought in its British Context* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published by the University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1981), 64.

seem distinct; Yet, if *rightly* ponder'd, they are all but one and the same Thing.⁴⁵ Although he is principally known as a Cambridge Platonist, More drew heavily on Aristotle. Not unlike Edwards himself at various points in his career, More was a hearty critic of 'enthusiasts' for their antinomian tendencies. At one juncture in his well-known invective *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*, More reviles the 'enthusiastical' tendency to regard natural love 'as if it were his [God's] very Essence; whenas indeed it is here nothing else but *Melancholy* that has put on the garments of an Angel of light.'⁴⁶ Puritan scruples would need to qualify certain possible extrapolations of eudaemonism—such that saving grace must be the origin of any true virtue or happiness—but Edwards spent a good deal of philosophical energy maintaining More's central affirmation in the *Enchiridion* that '*Virtue is the top and perfection of every Nature*' and virtue makes us '*not only good, but also happy....* [which the classical philosophers More appropriates] define ... to be the Perfection of human Life'⁴⁷ There is also a metaphysic of goodness in the *Enchiridion* that speaks volumes about the high degrees of virtue embraced within the latitudinarian component of the Reformed tradition Edwards inherited. The whole creation is, if following its natural propensities, striving upward toward its own fulfillment. Edwards will develop at great length the first of twenty-three 'noema' into which More believed '*almost all the Reasons of Morality may be reduced*': namely, that '*Good is that which is grateful, pleasant, and congruous to any Being, which hath Life and Perception, or that contributes in any degree to the preservation of it.*'⁴⁸ Absent from this conception of the human place within creation is the 'voluntarist' view of God's arbitrarily choosing traits pleasing to the divine nature irrespective of their stature within a pre-existing hierarchy of value. To say that 'whatever is Intellectual and truly Moral, is also Divine, and partakes of God' is forcefully to connect divinity to the teleological perfection of the creation's manifest nature, not to hold out for revelation from the hidden will of God.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Henry More, *Enchiridion Ethicum* (London: 1690; New York, 1930), preface A6.

⁴⁶ Henry More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus; OR, A BRIEF DISCOURSE OF The Nature, Causes, Kinds, and Cure of Enthusiaism* (London: 1662; reprint Los Angeles: Huntington Library, 1966), 13; italics original.

⁴⁷ More, *Enchiridion Ethicum*, 2; italics original.

⁴⁸ More, *Enchiridion Ethicum*, 20, 21; italics original.

⁴⁹ More, *Enchiridion Ethicum*, 80.

The Ubiquity of Puritanism

Although he certainly engaged many continental Reformed thinkers, it must never be forgotten that Edwards came to his view on the relationship between justification and sanctification through the lens of the intellectual context of New England and his own particular experiences with his long-time pastorate in Northampton, Massachusetts. One of the theological issues of most heightened tension in the more classically Calvinist spectrum of congregationalism for which he stood was how to balance remedying the polemically charged boundary states of Arminianism and 'antinomianism.' Arminianism could be avoided by allowing the effects of sanctification to function only as a secondary support to the primary testimony of assurance offered by the agent's perception of faith. Some delicacy was required, however, in diffusing the substratum of intentional human agency required in advance of the receipt of grace. If he pruned back human cooperation too far, the result is an 'antinomian' position where saving grace enters the human person in a manner that has been described as a 'holy rape of the surprised will.'⁵⁰ Human nature is so far from containing within it the sufficient causes of the realization of its own teleology, in the antinomian view, that it must be destroyed, replaced or otherwise covered over to achieve its end. We shall see that Edwards deliberately sought to avoid this position in the *Religious Affections* and elsewhere, refusing to divest states of character from among the criteria indicative of salvation.

Calvin's explication of the doctrines of justification and sanctification in terms of an organically connected 'double gift' of grace is meant to cut the cord of antinomianism at just this point. As Philip Gura notes, the seventeenth-century radical Spiritist could believe that as long as the Holy Spirit indwelt within the regenerate soul some ordinance violations could be seen as countenanced or commanded by God.⁵¹ Even though one is not saved by works, some capacity to do good works (actual righteousness) is, for Calvin, given along side of the gift of imputed righteousness. Notwithstanding the insurmountable stain of original sin, the elect are able, with the comfort of justification and the

⁵⁰ Credit for this evocative phrase belongs to Perry Miller ('Preparation for Salvation in Seventeenth-Century New England,' *The Journal of the History of Ideas* 4 [June 1943]: 261).

⁵¹ Philip F. Gura, *A Glimpse of Zion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620–1660* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), 169.

(initially partial) gift of sanctification, to draw gradually closer to God in the uprightness of their behavior. Still, no formal rule disbars the possibility in classic Reformed thought of morally bad persons being among the elect provided that sanctification is present *to some degree* and that it grows *in some fashion*. One cannot, however, glean from the standard Calvinist historiography on this point Edwards's significantly stronger insistence that it is only the habitual expression of charity that counts as evidence of sanctification.

Without explicitly invoking the term like the Protestant scholastics did before him, Edwards does employ the concept of the practical syllogism to carve out a space for himself between the inherited heterodoxies of antinomianism and Arminianism. As Theophilus Gale defined it, a syllogism is required when '[t]hat which induceth a Necessitie of *Ratiocentation* and *Argumentation* is the Composition and Limitation of the human Intellect, which cannot judge of the Veritie or Falsitie of a Proposition, by the sole consideration of its Termes, without assuming a *middle Terme* or *Argument*, for the demonstration thereof.'⁵² What cannot be determined merely by looking at its own terms singly in the matter of human regeneration is whether a given person's virtue is salvific or not. Augustine's view of the virtues of pagans being 'splendid vices' and Luther's call of *sola fide* left Reformed thinkers quite capable of regarding moral virtues such as prudence or fortitude as possessed by the unregenerate without redeeming qualities. The logical force of the inference that comprises the middle term of the practical syllogism draws attention to the inseparability of the various moments of the *ordo salutis*. If God gives both the grace of justification and the grace of sanctification together in one gift, then where one is present the other must be present as well. Calvin's concern about preserving the force of justification by faith prohibits him from specifying *how* good the elect are even for the purposes of assurance of salvation—this being possible on the basis of 'faith itself'—much less for the purposes of salvation itself. Although he did share the concern, Edwards is not similarly held back and, indeed, explicitly denies that a robust insistence upon the practical syllogism violates or abrogates the doctrine of justification by faith. 'Tis our works being the price of God's favor,' he insists, 'and not their being the sign of it, that is the thing which is inconsistent with the freeness of that favor.'⁵³ In subsequent chapters we will have to recalibrate it with

⁵² Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 8; italics original.

⁵³ *WJE* 2, 455. Thomas Manton, whose commentary on James is just one among

Edwards's felt need to avoid Arminianism, but the task of articulating his conception of the practical syllogism makes crystallizing his critique of antinomianism a greater priority.

It cannot be complained that historians have ignored the significant virtue tradition within Puritanism. When I have expressed my interest in bringing out Edwards's conception of virtue in its full robustness out from under layers of Reformed suspicions of 'works righteousness,' one response has been 'so you think Perry Miller got it right after all?' This reaction is not altogether unwarranted. When in subsequent chapters I find in Edwards's writings attendant concepts such as habituation, prudential reasoning, the practical syllogism, and a conditional perseverance of the saints, I will indeed draw on that portion of the Puritan heritage well documented by Miller. I acknowledge these continuities gladly. And other scholars have proceeded admirably toward articulating a Puritan 'middle way' between a diminution of virtue vis-à-vis concerns about 'works righteousness' and a soteriology in which repentance upon hearing the Word is the condition of faith and not some prior receipt of the grace of the elect.⁵⁴ David D. Hall, for instance, confirmed in 1987 a rediscovery of '... a Puritanism less dominated by the sectarian insistence on free grace and the direct witness of the Holy Spirit, and more "ethical" in its emphasis.'⁵⁵ That a whole book should be needed to establish how Edwards shared a Puritan concern for 'works' I would expect to be somewhat puzzling from a strictly his-

many seventeenth-century sources he cited which affirms that '... Obedience is not the condition of Justification, but the *evidence*; not the condition and qualification of the new Covenant, so much as of the *Covenanters* ... it must be in the *Same Subject*, though it hath not a voice in the *Same Court*' (Thomas Manton, *A Practical Commentary: an exposition with notes on the epistle of James* [London, 1651], 336).

⁵⁴ On the latter end of the spectrum see Alister E McGrath, *Iustitia dei*, Vol. 2, *From 1500 to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 142. David D. Hall powerfully presents Puritanism as a 'middle way' movement confounding monolithic categories like 'denominationalism,' 'Calvinism,' and 'conversion' (Hall, 'Narrating Puritanism,' in *New Directions in American Religious History*, ed. Harry S. Stout and D.G. Hart [New York: Oxford University Press, 1997], 64–75). John Von Rohr rejects the bifurcated conception of the Reformed tradition as well, at least insofar as it is seen as a basis for suggesting that Puritans made divine-human interaction substantively conditional. '[T]he Calvinist heritage of sovereign grace,' he writes, 'was not compromised through the urging of human participation and agency, nor was that human responsibility rendered insignificant by the proclamation of God's predestining power' (*The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* [Athens, Ga.: Scholars Press, 1986], 30).

⁵⁵ David D. Hall, 'On Common Ground: The Coherence of American Puritan Studies,' *William and Mary Quarterly* 44 (April 1987): 221.

torical perspective. One needn't leave the seventeenth-century to see that the Puritans cared a good deal about works. Thomas Shepard, a figure Edwards read closely and is indeed quite close to on number of points, is an excellent example.⁵⁶ Even if the *range of options* had been broadly set out by Miller and as accurately fine-tuned as necessary by subsequent revisionists, the significant efforts of Puritanism scholars to register the importance of 'works' have nevertheless been only rarely applied to Edwards himself.⁵⁷

If the Puritan tradition helps us gain a sense of some of Edwards's options, however, it does not exhaust them. Nor does it tell us which precise point along a spectrum of possible Puritan answers he chose. While no one can fundamentally think without baseline reference to known options, moreover, so too might over-contextualization diminish the possibility of Edwards's eclecticism—either in terms of such theological matters as the culture of portents, biblical typology, and the *prisca theologia* as well as in terms of the sorting out of philosophical engagements with Aristotelianism, Epicureanism, Platonism, Stoicism, Neoplatonism that occupied seventeenth-century Reformed thinkers.⁵⁸ Edwards did have access to important trends in eighteenth-century learning. But despite correspondence with well-connected ministers like

⁵⁶ The antinomian controversy is a highly prominent instantiation of this. See David D. Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1968).

⁵⁷ Recent work showing Edwards's reliance on the seventeenth-century American Puritan Thomas Shepard must be cited as a notable exception. See, e.g., Ava Chamberlain, 'Brides of Christ and Signs of Grace: Edwards's Sermon Series on the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins,' in *Jonathan Edwards's Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation*, ed. Stephen J. Stein (Bloomington, Ind.: University of Indiana Press, 1996), 3–18; Stover, 'The Godly Will's Discerning: Shepard, Edwards, and the Identification of True Godliness,' in *Jonathan Edwards's Writings*, ed. Stein, 85–99; Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies In Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 198–213.

⁵⁸ Richard Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520–ca. 1725*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), Vol. 1, 68. Fiering shares the view of William Sparks Morris that 'academic philosophy in early eighteenth-century America was necessarily eclectic' (*Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought in its British Context* [Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published by the University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1981], 38). On Edwards's list of reading see Robert E. Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002), 1–26. On Edwards's engagement with the *prisca theologia*, see Gerald R. McDermott, *Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion, and Non-Christian Faiths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 93–109.

John Erskine of Scotland, his list of reading was piecemeal.⁵⁹ He mainly read what books suited his polemical and episodic interests and of these the even narrower subset of what he could get his hands on in the Connecticut River Valley.⁶⁰ An even more important reason not to over-determine the value of the Puritan context for pinpointing Edwards's thought is that Puritanism itself encompasses such a wide range of positions on such questions as the connection between justification and sanctification.

Their precise lines may move out wider or come in narrower; but two new studies of the boundaries of Puritanism make this point clear. David R. Como characterizes antinomianism as '... an evolutionary trend within puritanism, rather than a separate and discrete stream flowing from a distinct source. Even as it departed from this broader synthesis,' Como continues, '...many of the central cultural features of antinomianism were in fact direct outgrowths or amplifications upon important aspects of mainstream puritanism.'⁶¹ Theodore Dwight Bozeman has cautioned that 'a non-disciplinary Puritanism—that is, a Puritanism without passion for moral control and purity—is a patent contradiction in terms'⁶² In a new study Bozeman recognizes that antinomianism was nonetheless 'a dissenting presence within the Puritan community' even as it was 'Puritanism's ideal "other," its almost perfectly configured opposite' and 'charter for post-Puritan, *post-disciplinary* Christianity.'⁶³ John Cotton is a primary example. When upon coming to New England Cotton sought 'to recuperate saintly real-

⁵⁹ See Christopher W. Mitchell, 'Jonathan Edwards' Scottish Connection,' in *Jonathan Edwards At Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons*, ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 222–247.

⁶⁰ All Edwards scholars await with considerable anticipation the exhaustive treatment of Edwards's list of reading Peter Theusen is preparing for the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* series. In the meantime, the editor's introductions of each of the volumes of 'Miscellanies' prepared by Thomas Schafer (*WJE* 13, 1–123), Ava Chamberlain (*WJE* 18, 1–48), Amy Plantinga Pauw (*WJE* 20, 1–39), and Douglas Sweeney (*WJE* 23, 1–36) contain valuable detailed commentary on the sources of Edwards's thought.

⁶¹ David R. Como, *Blown By the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Civil-War England* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 28.

⁶² Theodore Dwight Bozeman, 'The Glory of the "Third Time": John Eaton as Contra-Puritan,' *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 47 (1996): 654; cited in Como, *Blown By the Spirit*, 29.

⁶³ Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisianist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 334; italics original.

ity, and to make the Lord again the sovereign focus of faith', toward which end he felt he must 'downgrade ... the place of "benefits."' But this 'wrenching' downgrading of 'all the forms of regenerate behavior, all new powers and emotions, all the saintly round of devotional and self-managing performances' had the result of downgrading 'in short, a large share of that which made the colonists' religion Puritan.'⁶⁴ At the same time, however, one of the mechanisms by which he sought to entrench these antinomian inroads was 'by accenting the vintage Puritan urge to make religion less human and more divine,' a critique whose objects 'were akin to the liturgical and ecclesiological "human inventions" that Puritans long had assailed.'⁶⁵ What is of particular significance about Bozeman's study is that even as it seeks to posit an eventual parting of the ways between the two, not only are some antinomian forces seen as arising out of and shaping Puritanism, they are documented as doing so with respect to the most perfectionist forms of Puritanism, i.e., precisionism. Our consideration of the full spectrum of Edwards's writings from the earliest to the latest will indeed offer examples from both extremes. If the models from which he built up his vision were as wide as to encompass both antinomianism and precisionism, clearly the case has to be made on the basis of what his writings themselves say not merely on ascriptions of his conformity to general features of Puritanism. It cannot be a matter of disinterest *what particular vision* such a major figure as Edwards had on as major a question as the relationship between virtue and salvation.

The Practical Syllogism Used Against the Revivalists

Edwards's first and most prominent critique of antinomianism is the excoriation of those who would separate sanctification from justification in the economy of God's salvific will.⁶⁶ In connection with the Eighth Sign of gracious affections in Part III of the *Religious Affections*, he insists not only that sanctification is an important step along the progression from election to glorification, but that it is the end of the process of

⁶⁴ Bozeman, *The Precianist Strain*, 252.

⁶⁵ Bozeman, *The Precianist Strain*, 257.

⁶⁶ *WJE* 2, 356.

regeneration.⁶⁷ If sanctification is not only an intrinsic component of the process of regeneration but its end, however, then the ‘... practical exercises of grace ... those exercises wherein grace is brought to its proper effect and end, and the exercises wherein whatsoever belongs to its design, tendency and operation is completed and crowned ... must be the highest evidences of grace.’⁶⁸ Scriptural sources are replete, in Edwards’s view, with evidence against the divorcing of faith from works, of sanctification from justification. Here as elsewhere, he uses natural imagery to great effect. It is, he observes, impossible to have a good fruit from a tree with bad sap: ‘... man’s nature may be compared to a tree, with many branches, coming from one root: if the sap in the root be good, there will also be good sap distributed throughout the branches, and the fruit that is brought forth will be good and wholesome; but if the sap in the root and stock be poisonous, so it will be in many branches ... and the fruit will be deadly.’⁶⁹ Biblically speaking, actions are louder than words. ‘Christ nowhere says,’ Edwards insists, ‘...ye shall know men by their talk, or ye shall know them by the good story they tell of their experiences, or ye shall know them by the manner and air of their speaking, and emphasis and pathos of expression, or by their speaking feelingly, or by making a very great show by abundance of talk ... but by their fruits shall ye know them’⁷⁰ And ‘... if we make the word of Christ our rule,’ he stipulates, ‘then undoubtedly those marks which Christ and his apostles did chiefly lay down, and give to us, that we might try ourselves by them, those same marks we ought especially to receive, and chiefly to make use of, in the trial of ourselves.’⁷¹ If a more traditional Calvinist interlocutor were to respond that the goodness humans are able to achieve falls so pitifully short of an appropriate response to God’s gift of redemption, Edwards’s rejoinder, at least in this text, is that the nature of God’s covenant ‘... would be in vain, to any such purpose, as the saints’ strong consolation, and hope of their obtaining future glory, if their interest in those sure promises in ordinary cases, was not attainable.’⁷² That is to say, the covenant would be in vain if human beings, through God’s intervention, could not become actually good. Edwards thinks that it

⁶⁷ *WJE* 2, 398–399; see also *WJE* 2, 435.

⁶⁸ *WJE* 2, 435–436; see also *WJE* 2, 399.

⁶⁹ *WJE* 2, 151.

⁷⁰ *WJE* 2, 407.

⁷¹ *WJE* 2, 437; see also, *WJE* 2, 356.

⁷² *WJE* 2, 169.

is, indeed, attainable and that on this basis it is possible to have a firm assurance of one's salvation.

Edwards's second rebuttal of antinomianism under a general defense of the practical syllogism as a ground for assurance of salvation is that certain character traits are inseparable from the state of sanctification while others are inherently incompatible with it. When justification and sanctification are improperly separated, there is a logical opening for the claim that any habits whatever are compatible with the state of those 'in favor with God.'⁷³ At least, if no habit is necessarily connected with the indwelling of the Spirit, then no habit is necessarily disconnected with it either. Edwards takes explicit objection to this supposition. 'There are some amiable qualities and virtues,' he writes, 'that do more especially agree with the nature of the gospel constitution, and Christian profession; because there is a special agreeableness in them, with those divine attributes which God has more remarkably manifested and glorified in the work of redemption by Jesus Christ, that is the grand subject of the Christian revelation; and also a special agreeableness with those virtues that were so wonderfully exercised by Jesus Christ towards us in that affair'⁷⁴ A deportment lacking in humility, for instance, especially with regard to one's own spiritual achievements, is so discordant with the grace caused by the indwelling of the Spirit that Edwards suspects the veracity of the attainments that accompany it. '[E]minently humble saints, that will shine brightest in heaven, are not at all apt to profess high.'⁷⁵ The habit of charity and the habit of pride are conceptually, analytically, at odds. Fear is another habit which Edwards argues is incompatible with Christian love: '... God has wisely ordained, that these two opposite principles of love and fear, should rise and fall, like the two opposite scales of a balance; when one rises, the other sinks.'⁷⁶ A similar point is made in connection with all those affections that can be said to be pointed out by 'the lamblike, dovelike spirit and temper of Jesus Christ.'⁷⁷

Third, Edwards follows Nicolas Malebranche in supposing that the person who conforms to the divine attributes, 'honors God, draws near to Him and is united to Him, is conforming to His immutable law

⁷³ *WJE* 2, 84.

⁷⁴ *WJE* 2, 346.

⁷⁵ *WJE* 2, 322; see also *WJE* 2, 323.

⁷⁶ *WJE* 2, 179.

⁷⁷ *WJE* 2, 345. Forgiveness and mercy are also put forward as part of the cluster of character traits making up this saintly profile (*WJE* 2, 346, 355).

by governed movements which leave a habit or disposition of charity behind them.⁷⁸ In the seventh sign of Part III, that gracious affections are attended with a more or less permanent change of character: '[i]f there be a very great alteration visible in a person for a while; if it ben't abiding, but he afterwards returns, in a stated manner to be much as he used to be; it appears to be no change of nature. For nature is an abiding thing. A swine that is of a filthy nature may be washed; but the swinish nature remains.'⁷⁹ Only the *fixedness* of the habit of love—not merely an occasional demonstration—qualifies as the real love distinguishable from non-religious affections.⁸⁰ An agent's spiritual state cannot be judged merely by whether the Holy Spirit indwells or not. It is not a metaphysical either/or but a complex moral qualification of whether one has the *habit* of love. '... [T]he degree of religion,' Edwards writes, 'is rather to be judged of by the fixedness and strength of the habit that is exercised in affection, whereby holy affection is habitual, than by the degree of the present exercise'⁸¹ Edwards's treatise on the affections here takes the same line as William Fenner's 1650 treatise on the subject. Affections, Fenner observes, are a 'thing of continual and great concernment: for they will never be idle, but still running out and bringing into the soul, either healing or hurtful objects, and so authours either of our woe or welfare: and certain signs either of our happinesse, that we are risen with Christ: or misery, that we are still dead.'⁸² Theophilus Gale, too, regards actions as revealing the central desire of the will. 'The bent of the Wil,' he writes, 'is as a Pondus that carries the whole Soul either to good or bad: when the deliberation and intention of a bended Wil concurs in a good mater for a good end, the action is good: And what bends the Wil in this manner, but virtuose habits?'⁸³ For an agent that is morally good habitually, good actions have an ease that makes them what that agent most wants to do. When that habit is virtuous, an inherently enjoyable good, its exercises 'are not only spiritually natural ... but also most *facile*, *sweet* and *delicious*.'⁸⁴ Acts that do not issue forth from this center of agency

⁷⁸ Nicolas Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics* (1684), translation with an introduction by Craig Walton (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1993), 165.

⁷⁹ *WJE* 2, 341.

⁸⁰ *WJE* 2, 118.

⁸¹ *WJE* 2, 118.

⁸² William Fenner, *A Treatise of the Affections, OR The Souls Pulse* (London, 1650), 1.

⁸³ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 60.

⁸⁴ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 100.

and delight cannot be considered human at all.⁸⁵ They are instead, in Gale's words, no more than the actions of '*Automata*, those artificeal Machines or Images called Puppits; which seem to move their eyes, hands, feet &c. whereas indeed they are moved only by artificial forrein impresses.'⁸⁶ What is requisite in the human agency of saintly virtue is a particular prioritizing of excellences, a choice between divine and worldly good. Even after the Fall, Edwards asserts, it still remains the case for God 'strictly to require supreme regard to himself,' consisting in 'perfect subordination to the ends, and agreeableness to the rules and limits, which his holiness, honor and law prescribe'⁸⁷

The case that fixedness of habit as an indicator of truly sanctified charity is made as strongly in Edwards's later defense of original sin. While the defenders and detractors of this doctrine did spar earnestly as to the quantity of good actions human beings could be said to perform, it would be a mistake to suppose that this was the only or most basic point of contention between them. More important is how both sides defined the human goodness they attempt to quantify. This is clear, for example, in the way Edwards sets up the problem at the beginning of the treatise. 'The question to be considered, in order to determine whether man's nature is not depraved and ruined,' he writes, 'is not whether he is not inclined to perform as many *good deeds* as *bad ones*, but, which of these two he preponderates to, in the frame of his heart, and state of his nature'⁸⁸ Although he does not require moral perfection,⁸⁹ requisite of such a preponderance is 'savor[ing] the things that be of God,' a 'relishing and embracing true holiness or divine virtue.'⁹⁰ For a sanctified person, in whom virtuous affections outweigh selfish or cruel affections, this delight in God supersedes the delight in worldly things. Evil affections consist in an inordinate love of other things besides God. When virtuous affections prevail over evil affec-

⁸⁵ *WJE* 2, 422. One of the theses in Fiering's impressively detailed discussion of master's degree commencement defenses (*Moral Philosophy at Harvard*, 29–42) was one arguing that 'A single act does not engender a habit ... (*Per unum actum non generatur habitus*)' (*ibid.*, 74); italics original.

⁸⁶ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 61; italics original.

⁸⁷ *WJE* 3, 383. The sentence from which this excerpt is extracted reflects an unclear syntax. I believe my abridgment stays true to what can be readily inferred of its main drift, however.

⁸⁸ *WJE* 3, 128; italics in the original.

⁸⁹ *WJE* 3, 137; see also *WJE* 3, 135. Compare Calvin on the degree of depravity left in the saints (*Institutes* III, xiv, 9; *Institutes* III, xi, 14; *Institutes* IV, i, 16).

⁹⁰ *WJE* 3, 279.

tions, sanctified charity may be said to have a 'governing influence' in the self.⁹¹ Edwards raises the standard further by arguing that the radical superiority of God's excellences when compared with the goods offered by the world requires a high intensity in the loving affections of the saint: '... if our esteem of God, desires after him, and delight in him were such as become us, considering the things forementioned, they would exceed our regard to other things ... and would swallow up all other affections, like a deluge.'⁹² But in addition to his quantification of this intensity, which in the *Religious Affections* he was careful to admit could easily be counterfeited, he places a high premium on constancy in this later treatise. If these loving affections are real, they must issue forth in the kind of action indicative of a fixed disposition: '... that habits, either good or bad, should continue after being once established, or that habits should be settled and have existence, in consequence of repeated acts, can be owing only to a *course of nature*, and those *laws of nature* which God has established.'⁹³ A fixed disposition can only flow from constant practice. '... [O]ne act,' Edwards writes, 'don't prove a fixed inclination; but ... constant practice and pursuit does.'⁹⁴ Even this, however, is not enough to pass Edwards's stringent test of a propensity to goodness. As is suggested by the trial by fire imagery of the *Religious Affections*, constant practice must be tested and stand firm under a variety of situations and circumstances.⁹⁵

The conjoined force of these three points is the round dismissal of the notion that God's love can be defined as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit without stipulating the characterological components of this love. Edwards is confident that gracious charity is visible: '... if others could see so much of what belongs to men's practice, as their own consciences may see of it, it might be an infallible evidence of their state'⁹⁶ But this is not the case; and the difference matters. The appeal of antinomianism in the radical 'Spiritist' fringe of Puritanism was (to cite an expression William K.B. Stoever uses to great effect) 'a faire and easie way to heaven.'⁹⁷ So could the practical syllogism become, in inexperienced

⁹¹ *WJE* 3, 146; see also *WJE* 3, 231.

⁹² *WJE* 3, 142; see also *WJE* 7, 525.

⁹³ *WJE* 3, 385 (italics in the original).

⁹⁴ *WJE* 3, 191.

⁹⁵ *WJE* 3, 193.

⁹⁶ *WJE* 2, 420.

⁹⁷ Stoever notes that this expression was first invoked by Thomas Weld, the Massachusetts Bay Colony's London agent, in his preface to John Winthrop's published

hands, a panacea for would-be saints. One could, for example, insist upon good works so rigidly or so imprecisely that the requirement fails to be sensitive to the possibility of semblances of virtue. Edwards, however, is far from saying that it is easy to apply the practical syllogism. Human actions are hardly univocal or straightforward. It cannot be determined that a given action embodies holy affections merely from observing its outward form. ‘... [T]he obedience and fruit that God mainly looks at, as he looks at the soul, more than the body; as much as the soul, in the constitution of the human nature, is the superior part.’⁹⁸ The fact that the internal operations of a person are difficult to see leads Edwards to retain some of the common Calvinist reluctance to judge the state of others’ souls by their actions.⁹⁹ But as we can see into our own hearts, however, and see what we do in private, and know of our own subterfuge and dissembling, he thinks we may know with much greater certainty our own spiritual states.¹⁰⁰ Although no one can judge infallibly whether another person is actually exhibiting a sanctified habit, it nevertheless remains easier to misinterpret the indwelling of the spirit from *a priori* signs, than from *a posteriori* signs such as the twelve he proposed. This is not to say that he refuses to recognize other more faith-centered grounds for assurance,¹⁰¹ just that these, like Calvin’s conception of the ‘secondary’ or supportive function of good works, can only be ineffectual by themselves. We will see that it is only under very specific and restrictive conditions that a person’s loving affections constitute a preponderance toward the good. Resonant with Augustine’s image of the ‘weight’ (*pondus*) of a soul,¹⁰² the core of a person’s character has a particular nature that disposes its *telos* either upward toward God or downward away from God. True virtue is not captured by a sporadic show of loving affection in action because the latter is ‘... like an heavy body, which may by some great power be caused to ascend, against its nature, a little while, but soon goes back again towards the center, to which it naturally and constantly tends.’¹⁰³ If the communications of the Holy Spirit were immediate and transi-

account of the Antinomian Controversy. See *The Antinomian Controversy: A Documentary History*, ed. David D. Hall (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1968), 203.

⁹⁸ *WJE* 2, 424.

⁹⁹ *WJE* 2, 420.

¹⁰⁰ *WJE* 2, 420.

¹⁰¹ *WJE* 2, 195.

¹⁰² St. Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, xvii; VII, xvi; *City of God*, XII, ix.

¹⁰³ *WJE* 3, 198.

tory, then it would be possible to be sanctified at one point and then fall out of this state when or if the Spirit departed. Edwards denies that this is possible. Raised religious affections which do not lend themselves to a greater love of virtue—and, we may infer, greater enjoyment of engaging in virtuous behaviors—reveal themselves to be semblances.¹⁰⁴ Despite these caveats and provisos, Edwards then should be seen as foundationally inverting Calvin's view that the practical syllogism can be a helpful subsidiary support to the primary (subjective) certainty of faith itself. The habitual exercise of Christian charity, an actually holy life, becomes the primary means of assurance, '... the chief of all the signs of grace, both as an evidence of the sincerity of professors unto others, and also to their own consciences.'¹⁰⁵

The Practical Syllogism Used Against Moral Sense Philosophy

Having set out the basic parameters of Edwards's application of the practical syllogism of Protestant scholasticism, we must leave the remainder of our treatment of Edwards on the revivals and on the religious affections for Chapter 3. The treatise of 1746 represents a comprehensive critique of 'antinomian' revivalism, and as such, most of its treatment of sanctified charity concerns the claim *that it is* a distinguishing sign of truly gracious affections. It is only in the *Two Dissertations*, however, when it comes to distinguishing the motives the regenerate and unregenerate bring to their love of God and neighbor, that he finalizes his conception of the spiritual 'sense' allowing the regenerate to perceive dimensions of reality inaccessible to the unregenerate and finalizes with it his fullest account of the practical syllogism.

More in terms of a general claim than in the manner of a text-based treatment of either Shaftesbury or Hutcheson, Edwards found in the 'moral sense' they espoused a natural analogue of the 'new sense

¹⁰⁴ *WJE* 2, 344. See also *WJE* 2, 118–119.

¹⁰⁵ *WJE* 2, 406. A holy life is not the only grounds of assurance, of course. There are eleven other signs, several of which could find analogs in Calvin's conception of faith. There is also a passage in the *Treatise* where Edwards seems to allow the kind of subjective ground of assurance Calvin relies on primarily (*WJE* 2, 238–239). Note, though, that he is quick to point out that this assurance is not unmediated (*WJE* 2, 239). Some, though not all, of the subjective aspect of this must be seen to be mollified with this qualification.

of the heart' that characterized regenerate sensibilities.¹⁰⁶ This 'sixth sense' orients the agent to the appropriateness and desirability of past, present and future states of affairs, states of character and courses of action. With a natural approbation towards justice, for example, agents puts before themselves a given course of action and the feeling of pleasure or pain at the moral qualities that arise in connection with that course of action help determine what they will opt to do. With some allowances made, positively, for the kind of education necessary to fully train the moral sense and, negatively, for the kind of trauma that could dissipate it,¹⁰⁷ this moral sense was thought to represent a power residing in human beings apart from saving grace. I will present Edwards's critique of the moral sense of the sentimentalists in four steps. The first step clarifies the formal features of his distinction between true virtue and semblances of virtue. The second step, upon which Edwards expends the most effort, is the qualification that a sufficiently rigorous application of the practical syllogism is limited to those character traits which embody the kind of charity only the elect have. The third step is not a qualification as much as an explanatory clarification. Edwards here explores why true virtue is so often mistaken with its semblances. In the fourth step, Edwards finalizes the connection between the two halves of the *Two Dissertations* with his argument for the primacy of motive in moral acts. He insists that true virtue is characterized by a love of virtue for its own sake.

Edwards's first order of business in *The Nature of True Virtue* (hereafter *True Virtue*) is a clarification of terms. At the heart of the differentiation of true virtue from its various semblances are two formal distinctions, both of which were foreshadowed in *The End for Which God Created the*

¹⁰⁶ It is important to recognize the multiplicity of subtly different positions that may fall under the heading of the moral sense. See, for instance, John D. Bishop's treatment of the various stages of development in Hutcheson's theory of the moral sense in 'Moral Motivation and the Development of Francis Hutcheson's Philosophy,' *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57, No. 2 (April 1996): 277–296. Nevertheless, it is possible to identify enough common features that general statements such as this one are not entirely inapt. For a helpful summary of Edwards's relationship to moral sense philosophy, see Avihu Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History: The Reenchantment of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 313–324.

¹⁰⁷ See, for instance, George Turnbull, *The Principles of Moral and Christian Philosophy*, Vol. 1, *The Principles of Moral Philosophy: an inquiry into the wise and good government of the moral world: in which the continuance of good administration and of due care about virtue for ever is inferred from present order in all things, in that part chiefly where virtue is concerned* (London: Printed for J. Noon, 1740), 90–107, 138–141, 291, 437–441.

World (hereafter *End in Creation*).¹⁰⁸ The first concerns the distinction between the appreciation of primary beauty and the appreciation of secondary beauty. Rather than begin with his relative paucity of direct commentary on this subject, however, a *via negativa* proves more expedient.

Calling to mind the distinction between the primary end for which God created the world and the ends secondary and subordinate to it, Edwards stipulates that in addition to ‘... the proper and peculiar beauty of spiritual and moral beings, which are the highest and first part of the universal system for whose sake all the rest has existence there is another, inferior, secondary beauty, which is some image of this, and which is not peculiar to spiritual beings, but is found even in inanimate things’¹⁰⁹ This, he stipulates, ‘... consists in a mutual consent and agreement of different things in form, manner, quantity, and visible end or design; called by the various names of regularity, order, uniformity, symmetry, proportion, harmony, etc.’¹¹⁰ Probing Edwards’s analysis of the diverse facets of justice allows us to use the contrast between primary and secondary beauty to the fullest benefit of defining the former. While Edwards did regard justice as a species of this beautiful symmetry in the world, he did not regard it as a sufficient motive for God’s creation of the world. To place justice at the center of God’s purpose for the creation as well as the end and fulfillment of human beings, he argued, is to confuse the symbol with what it symbolizes. While the levels of primary and secondary beauty have an analogical relationship with one another, justice is, nevertheless, a species of secondary beauty and not inherently related to the nature of true virtue. The essence of justice, is for Edwards, little more than the natural human approbation for harmony. There is, first, the sense in which the beauty of justice has to do with symmetrical proportions between people and/or actions just as the beauty of architecture has to do with symmetrical propor-

¹⁰⁸ I am using the term ‘semblance’ of virtue instead of Edwards’s own ‘counterfeit’ because of the latter’s connotation with deliberate dissimulation. The term semblance instead captures the artificiality without this suggestion. For a more detailed distinction between these two terms, see Lee H. Yearley, *Mencius and Aquinas: Theories of Virtue and Conceptions of Courage* (Albany, N.Y.: SUNY Press, 1990), 19–23.

¹⁰⁹ *WJE* 8, 561.

¹¹⁰ *WJE* 8, 561–562. The beauty of symmetry is one of the primary motifs of the strands of Enlightenment moral thought influenced by Renaissance Platonism and Neoplatonism. The symmetry, order, and harmony of the world were the most palpable evidence of God’s intelligent governance of intelligent creature. This aspect of Edwards’s thought will be given substantial attention in Chapter 2.

tions of material structures. ‘... [T]here is a beauty in the virtue called *justice*,’ he writes, ‘which consists in the agreement of different things that have relation to one another, in nature, manner, and measure: and therefore is the very same sort of beauty with that uniformity and proportion which is observable in those external and material things that are esteemed beautiful.’¹¹¹ And ‘[w]ho,’ Edwards asks, ‘will affirm that a disposition to approve of the harmony of good music, or the beauty of a square, or equilateral triangle is the same with true holiness, or a truly virtuous disposition of mind?’¹¹²

The heart of primary beauty is absent in both the regularities of justice and in what justice promotes. For the truly virtuous appreciate the beauty of justice not because of its symmetry, but because of its resemblance to primary beauty. Primary beauty is an appreciation of God’s comprehensive nature, which includes, but goes considerably beyond, the proportionality of justice. What motivates an action arising out of a love for secondary beauty is an ‘approving of actions, because we therein act as in agreement with ourselves, or as one with ourselves, and a thus disapproving and being uneasy in the consciousness of disagreeing and being inconsistent with ourselves in what we do’¹¹³ This is ‘quite a different thing,’ Edwards holds, ‘from approving or disapproving actions because in them we agree and are united with Being in general: which is loving or hating actions from a sense of the primary beauty of true virtue, and odiousness of sin.’¹¹⁴ Edwards would agree with Malebranche that ‘[i]t is because, instead of looking at the immutable Order as our inviolable and natural law, we make up ideas of virtue by shaping them at least in some respects to fit our own inclinations;’¹¹⁵ and this is not sufficient for virtue.¹¹⁶ As opposed to just actions, which are motivated by the sense of equity or symmetry of relationships within the structural confines of a bounded and cir-

¹¹¹ *WJE* 8, 569 (italics in the original).

¹¹² *WJE* 8, 573.

¹¹³ *WJE* 8, 590.

¹¹⁴ *WJE* 8, 590.

¹¹⁵ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 56. For Malebranche, Reason or Order stands in close relationship to the divine nature; but beyond this the similarity of the *Treatise on Ethics* with Edwards’s argument in the *Two Dissertations* is a very close one. Compare his observation that ‘[t]here are those who imagine themselves to follow virtue, though in fact they only follow their natural inclination to fulfill certain duties. And since it is not Reason which leads them in this, they are actually extremely vicious’ (*Treatise on Ethics*, 55).

¹¹⁶ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 65.

cumscribed portion of Being, '[t]rue virtue most essentially consists in benevolence to Being in general that consent, propensity and union of heart to Being in general, that is immediately exercised in a general good will.'¹¹⁷ An appreciation of the primary beauty of God stems from a love of God's nature as it is in and of itself, i.e., regardless of its relationship to a pre-existing schema of valuation like symmetry or justice. Those who, as Malebranche puts it, 'believe they love God though they live in disorder, i.e., without loving Order above all else' can only be said to 'in effect ... love only an immense phantom they have made for themselves.'¹¹⁸

The second formal distinction operative in Edwards's differentiation of true virtue from its semblances concerns the scope of the benevolence sustained by sanctified charity. For true virtue entails a benevolence to Being in general—that is to say, the entire creation as participating in and in some cases forwarding God's ends for it—as opposed to a particular and limited benevolence to some smaller portion of the creation (such as is picked out by secondary beauty, i.e., symmetry and/or proportion). Edwards makes this qualification in the second paragraph of *True Virtue*. He supposes '... it will generally be allowed ... that some actions and dispositions appear beautiful, if considered partially and superficially ... and in some of their circumstances and tendencies, which would appear otherwise in a more extensive and comprehensive view, wherein they are seen clearly in their whole nature and the extent of their connections in the universality of things.'¹¹⁹ Malebranche amplifies this point when he observes that '... Order, taken speculatively and only insofar as it contains the relations of perfection, enlightens the mind without striking it.'¹²⁰ Secondary beauty is superficial and partial because what is appreciated in it is a small sub-portion of the comprehensive creation. It would be like appreciating only the flying buttress of a medieval cathedral, leaving out its stained glass, historical significance, altar pieces, and general architectural style or merit. In the case of moral sensibilities, human moral reflection after the Fall is constrained to the horizons of self-love and only the primary causality of God's infusion of grace can expand it. The appreciation of

¹¹⁷ *WJE* 8, 540.

¹¹⁸ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 61.

¹¹⁹ *WJE* 8, 539–540.

¹²⁰ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 80. This stipulation of the meaning of Order is in contradistinction to 'Order, when considered as the law of God, as the law of all minds' (ibid.).

primary beauty and thus the possession of true virtue is inaccessible to the unregenerate because they remain trapped within the confines of natural human moral capacities.¹²¹ The latter are constituted by self-love and an appreciation for symmetry, but also the natural instincts of pity and conscience, which, though they are not without their benefit to humanity, are necessarily limited in their scope. These are fundamentally distinct from, and often in opposition to, love of Being in general for its own sake.¹²² Natural morality can only undergird the ‘private system’ of an unregenerate person, the features of which ‘through the contracted limits of the mind and the narrowness of his views ... are ready to fill his mind and engross his sight, and to seem as if they were *all*.’¹²³

The limited scope of natural virtue applies whether it is characterized by an inborn benevolence, or, as Shaftesbury or Hutcheson would maintain, a moral sense approbative of what benevolent instincts humans have and disapprobative of instincts contrary to benevolence. No matter how great it extends, however, it cannot be true virtue, ‘so long as it contains but an infinitely small part of universal existence, and so bears no proportion to this great and universal system’¹²⁴ When Edwards generally speaks of the ‘cordial consent’ indicative of true virtue, then, he is referring to an enlarged perspective human beings who share in God’s charity may enjoy in this life.¹²⁵ Those who lack this intimate fellowship with God—this sharing of God’s nature, concerns, and dispositions—cannot cordially consent to being, but only connect with that fraction of the creation they can find beautiful through the wholly natural modalities of self-love, conscience, and the approbation of symmetry. There is an ineluctable difference between seeing something as beautiful in and of itself and seeing it as beautiful for some other reason.¹²⁶ Whereas, Edwards hypothesizes, ‘... a man may be pleased with the harmony of the notes in a tune and yet know noth-

¹²¹ *WJE* 8, 549, 590.

¹²² E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Theology From the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 116.

¹²³ *WJE* 8, 611; italics original.

¹²⁴ *WJE* 8, 601–602.

¹²⁵ In the case of what Edwards calls ‘natural agreement’ with secondary beauty it is the symmetries of the world and the symmetries implicit in those character traits that are generally approved of. In the case of ‘cordial agreement’ with primary beauty, it is the symmetries of the world as an imperfect expression of the God’s preexistent and primordial relationship of charity toward the world that are approved.

¹²⁶ *WJE* 8, 566.

ing of that proportion or adjustment of the notes, which by the law of nature is the ground of the melody,' in the case of God's primary beauty, part and parcel of seeing it *as* beautiful is seeing *why* it is beautiful.¹²⁷ The unregenerate do not understand why God's beauty is beautiful apart from its resemblance to other qualities, e.g., symmetry, order, harmony, etc. The regenerate, on the other hand, who have had God's charitable nature communicated to them through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (more on this in Chapter 2), know why God's goodness is beautiful in and of itself. They understand the beauty of charity because they possess it themselves. 'It is impossible that anyone should truly *relish* this beauty ...' Edwards writes, 'who has not that temper himself For if a being, destitute of benevolence, should love benevolence to Being in general, it would prize and seek that which it had no value for.'¹²⁸

The second step of Edwards's critique of moral sense theory with respect to the practical syllogism concerns the manner in which a sufficiently rigorous application of it is limited to those character traits which embody the kind of charity only the elect have. That the primary end for which God created the world is the communication of charity to the elect is an important component of this argument; but detailed consideration of it must await full attention in Chapter 2. We have enough context from this chapter, however, to appreciate Edwards's strategy in the middle chapters of *True Virtue* to show how far the natural 'moral sense' is from being a valid replacement for what is distinctive about sanctified charity. Three types of natural love discussed under the broad heading of the moral sense which can be shown, when pressed to their logical extreme, to be lesser semblances of the sanctified charity needed for assurance of salvation: (i) natural self-love, (ii) natural conscience, and (iii) natural instincts.¹²⁹ Edwards will argue that each fails to appreciate or embody primary beauty and achieve the universal scope 'benevolence to Being in general' has. We shall take each in turn.

¹²⁷ *WJE* 8, 566.

¹²⁸ *WJE* 8, 549; italics in the original.

¹²⁹ Edwards does not give a hard analytic proof of the distinction between natural and supernatural virtue either here or in *End in Creation*. The two distinctions we have just discussed stem from the Christian Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation and are merely a philosophical explanation or presentation of what is taken as doctrine grounded in revelation and confirmed by established church usage. Still, it is crucial to see that he is not reaffirming the distinction and rejecting the information given by the moral sense in an *a priori* fashion merely because it is natural.

The first source of semblances of virtue Edwards considers is the love generated by self-love. Edwards's first step in Chapter Four of *True Virtue* is to dispel any lingering confusion concerning his use of the latter term. He makes it very clear that he is not ruling out any disposition as truly virtuous merely because self-love enters into it.¹³⁰ Once the definition of self-love is cleared up, his next move is to argue that many actions, dispositions, and character traits that seem to be truly virtuous are actually species of self-love. He runs the gamut here from fairly obvious examples to subtle judgments of motive more open to debate. With respect to one of the former, for example, just as gravity draws all bodies with mass to the earth's center, Edwards regards '... a man's love to those that love him is no more than a certain expression or effect of self-love.'¹³¹ This applies to what might be called a person's political or business associations as well: '... that a man should love those that are of his party, when there are different parties contending one with another; and that are warmly engaged on his side, and promote his interest: this is the natural consequence of a private self-love.'¹³² Gratitude for kindness and anger for resentment are also mentioned.¹³³

Edwards then ventures to show that such sentiments as the approbation of gratitude, justice, and public benevolence can also be reduced to self-love. These are the more difficult test cases. Because we love ourselves, he argues, '... it should be natural to us to extend something of that same kind of love which we have for ourselves to them who are the same kind of beings as ourselves'¹³⁴ Thus, if we should feel gratitude for kindnesses done to ourselves, we should approve of second parties who feel gratitude for kindness done to them and disapprobation of those who do not feel gratitude for kindnesses done. What is required by true charity is what Malebranche calls freedom of mind. This quality refers to 'some facility at suspending the will's consent ... when two or several goods are present in the mind at the same time'¹³⁵ It is a truism about human beings, Malebranche holds, that the will 'never fails to choose the one which in that moment seems better to it, supposing all other things equal.'¹³⁶ What distinguishes the person who

¹³⁰ *WJE* 8, 575–577.

¹³¹ *WJE* 8, 579.

¹³² *WJE* 8, 578–579.

¹³³ *WJE* 8, 579–582.

¹³⁴ *WJE* 8, 581.

¹³⁵ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 89.

¹³⁶ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 89.

possesses charity is the ability to withhold consent from pursuing all apparent goods and give consent to goods only in that exact proportion of the true goodness they possess from God.¹³⁷ Likewise, Edwards argues, most of our approbation of justice can be reduced to self-love. We need justice directly: '[m]en from their infancy see the necessity of it, not only that it is necessary for others, or for human society; but they find the necessity of it for themselves in instances that continually occur: which tends to prejudice them in its favor, and to fix an habitual approbation of it from self-love.'¹³⁸ And public benevolence can be described as the collective love of people like ourselves whom we love *because* they are like ourselves. We want justice for them because we want justice for ourselves. Of course, Edwards is not claiming that an approbation of justice is necessarily indicative of an unsanctified character. Those who possess true virtue can also appreciate justice, though for different (as well as some of the same) reasons. Rather, he is saying that there is not necessarily any primary beauty in such a sense of justice.

Edwards gets even more radical in his supposition that a love for one's children, parents, and other family members is ultimately founded on self-love. In a manner reminiscent of Hume's conception of sympathy,¹³⁹ Edwards identifies '... affections to such as are near to us by the ties of nature ... and whom the constitution of the world makes to be united in interest, and accordingly to act as one in innumerable affairs, with a communion in each other's affections, desires, cares, friendships, enmities, and pursuits' as '[a]nother sort of affections which may be properly referred to self-love, as its source, and which might be expected to be the fruit of it, according to the general analogy of nature's laws.'¹⁴⁰ Again, these species of love are not ruled out as being true virtue merely because they are founded on self-love,¹⁴¹ but for the

¹³⁷ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 89.

¹³⁸ *WJE* 8, 587.

¹³⁹ See Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 2nd edition, with text revised and notes by P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press; Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 316–324, 498–501, 574–587. Fiering dates Edwards's reading of Hume's *Enquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals* as during 1754 or 1755, 'just before he started to write *True Virtue*' (*Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 140). Ramsey, however, argues that Edwards wrote out a substantially complete draft of the *Two Dissertations* by 1753/1754 (Ramsey, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 8, 8).

¹⁴⁰ *WJE* 8, 584.

¹⁴¹ Again, Edwards thinks that all human action involves self-love at some level. It is the quality of an action or disposition *in addition* to the presence of self-love that makes it morally praiseworthy or blameworthy.

subsequent reasons that they fail to appreciate primary beauty and have a limited scope.¹⁴² Consider, for example, Edwards's remarks concerning how a particular group is approbative of a virtue whose continuance and development serves its interests:

... men commonly are most affected towards, and do most highly approve, those virtues which agree with their interest most, according to their various conditions in life. We see that persons of low condition are especially enamored with a condescending, accessible, affable temper in the great; not only in those whose condescension has been exercised toward themselves; but they will be peculiarly taken with such a character when they have accounts of it from others, or when they meet with it in history, or even in romance. The poor will most highly approve and commend liberality. The weaker sex, who especially need assistance and protection, will peculiarly esteem and applaud fortitude and generosity in those of the other sex they read or hear of, or have presented to them on a stage.¹⁴³

The point is that any time self-love is the motivating factor, one is necessarily drawn in to a subsection of the totality of being; and nothing short of a love of the entirety of Being is the sufficient foundation of virtue.¹⁴⁴

In Chapter Five of *True Virtue*, Edwards expands his analysis of semblances of virtue to include those actions, affections, dispositions and character traits generated by natural conscience. Edwards's tamest example would probably be the general maxim of the Golden Rule, which was thought by many of his philosophical contemporaries to represent a simple venue for moral deliberation well within the reach of even the least reflective agents.¹⁴⁵ And perhaps the Golden Rule is a very ingrained human instinct. But Edwards did not deny what his philosophical contemporaries said about this faculty being part of the natural endowment of human beings.¹⁴⁶ Nor are these species of love ruled out as truly virtuous merely because they are ultimately founded on a natural faculty like conscience. Rather, he objects to the idea of them being equated with sanctified charity because they neither appreciate primary beauty nor are able to sustain benevolence of a universal scope. The actions or states of character approved by natural con-

¹⁴² Edwards's discussion of how the association of ideas (*WJE* 8, 585–588) can further distinguish affections built on self-love from true virtue is beyond the scope of this study.

¹⁴³ *WJE* 8, 586.

¹⁴⁴ *WJE* 8, 556.

¹⁴⁵ *WJE* 8, 591.

¹⁴⁶ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 139, 169.

science reflect the same symmetry as those approved of by self-love: '[t]o do that to another which we should be angry with him for doing to us, and to hate a person for doing that to us which we should incline to and insist on doing to him, if we were exactly in the same case, is to disagree with ourselves, and contradict ourselves.'¹⁴⁷ What is being appreciated in acts that conform to one's conscience, then, is the secondary beauty of regularity, order and symmetry and not the primary beauty of God's nature and goodness, which would yield '... loving or hating actions from a sense of the primary beauty of true virtue, and odiousness of sin.'¹⁴⁸ Malebranche's appropriation of Aristotle's account of virtue admits that habitually good people can sometimes execute single acts that are not good due to the simultaneity of different motives within the same characterological system.¹⁴⁹ It is quite possible, Edwards similarly argues, for the same person to abhor a moderately non-virtuous character trait like ingratitude because of its lack of reciprocating kindness while at the same time being unmoved by a positively vicious trait like malevolence, merely because the latter cannot be captured by a disproportion.¹⁵⁰ But just as he outlined those states of character that were inherently incompatible with sanctified charity in the *Religious Affections*, e.g., pride, aggression, he is here arguing that a truly virtuous character is definitionally incompatible with an ingrained habit of malevolence. This incompatibility helps to distinguish true virtue from the semblances common morality can generate.

Whereas there are scenarios where desiring someone's harm can be approved, or at least permitted, by common morality, it is categorically ruled out by true virtue. Under multiple circumstances, true virtue always desires the good of a person, never harm, even when this is accorded justice under the principle of symmetry.¹⁵¹ These species of natural conscience are also ruled out as true virtue because of their limited scope. Edwards does not bring this argument forward explicitly, but it is evident in the way his analysis of natural conscience builds on his analysis of self-love. The appreciation for symmetry Edwards sees as implicit in conscience—I approve the action and dispositions of a given agent because of their agreeableness to the actions and dispositions I

¹⁴⁷ *WJE* 8, 589–590.

¹⁴⁸ *WJE* 8, 590.

¹⁴⁹ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 89.

¹⁵⁰ *WJE* 8, 599.

¹⁵¹ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 143.

approve in myself or for myself—relies on the symmetry and privateness of self-love. Everything that my conscience approves as agreeable to my own moral judgments is dependent upon the precise nature of the latter, and these are derived largely from my private interests.

Thus, when a man's conscience disapproves of his treatment of his neighbor, in the first place he is conscious that if he were in his neighbor's stead, he should resent such treatment from a sense of justice, or from a sense of uniformity and equality between such treatment and resentment and punishment; as before explained. And then in the next place he perceives that therefore he is not consistent with himself, in doing what he himself should resent in that case; and hence disapproves it, as being naturally averse to opposition to himself.¹⁵²

It is significant that Edwards does not bring out natural conscience as a ground for full-fledged second-order approbation of virtuous traits in the same manner as with regard to self-love (where one's interests determine what one approves and disapproves of). For if '... that disposition to approve or disapprove the moral treatment which passes between us and others, from a determination of the mind to be easy, or uneasy, in a consciousness of our being consistent ... with ourselves,'¹⁵³ we could approve of our own and others' character traits for the purpose of being 'easy' with ourselves. Perhaps he truly does not think it possible for natural conscience to do this; but the disparity nevertheless highlights that he does not regard the influence of natural conscience to sink as deep into the self as self-love. At least it is not able to approve of something that was at odds with self-love. Natural conscience operates somehow on top of or subsequent to what self-love dictates.

On occasion, Edwards speaks as if self-love and natural conscience covered the entire spectrum of semblances of virtue.¹⁵⁴ But he goes on in Chapter Six of the text to pursue a third basis for semblances of virtue in the natural instincts. These too, he argues, while they may generate species of love resembling sanctified charity, are not of the same nature as it. It is first necessary here to note the great extent to which Edwards is admitting the validity of a general conception of the moral sense. Though he sees this as part of the place of common morality in God's merciful providential design,¹⁵⁵ he does admit that

¹⁵² *WJE* 8, 593.

¹⁵³ *WJE* 8, 592.

¹⁵⁴ *WJE* 8, 596–597.

¹⁵⁵ *WJE* 8, 600. It was, Edwards writes, 'established chiefly for the preservation of mankind' (*ibid.*).

there are, inherent in human nature, instincts ‘... consisting in affections of the mind which mankind naturally exercise towards some of their fellow creatures, or in some cases towards men in general,’ some of which ‘... may be called “kind affections,” as having something in them of benevolence, or a resemblance of it.’¹⁵⁶ But this species of natural instinct is also ruled out as a candidate for true virtue because of the less than universal scope of the benevolence it can generate. If its scope is limited to a sub-portion of general Being—one loves its members because they are close to one by birth or environment rather than because they participate in Being—communal affection can not be truly virtuous.¹⁵⁷

*Sharpening the Syllogism: The Distinctive
Motivational Structure of Sanctified Charity*

The third part of Edwards’s criticism of moral sense theory in connection with the practical syllogism explores why true virtue is so often mistaken with its semblances. It should be fairly clear that Edwards regards the appreciation of God’s primary beauty and the universal scope of true benevolence as a threshold over which the reprobate, however virtuous with respect to natural principles, cannot cross. But just as from God’s perspective (or in God) the diverse layers of the hierarchy of goods are in harmony, Edwards devotes most of Chapter Seven of *True Virtue* to emphasizing how the strong continuities between sanctified charity and common morality so often cause the various semblances of virtue to be mistaken for the real thing. In emphasizing the commonalties between common morality and true virtue he is (i) praising God’s mercy even to the reprobate, (ii) showing the difficulty facing the practical syllogism given how good some of the semblances are, but also (iii) setting up his most powerful argument for the distinctiveness of sanctified charity.¹⁵⁸ As I will discuss shortly, the most fundamental

¹⁵⁶ *WJE* 8, 600. See also Edwards’s statement of agreement with Hutcheson and Hume discussed by Ramsey (*WJE* 8, 604–605 n2).

¹⁵⁷ *WJE* 8, 601–602.

¹⁵⁸ Overemphasizing the continuities between common morality and true virtue is one of the most deleterious consequences of the failure to see how the main current of Edwards’s thought flows in the stream of the Christian virtue tradition. Unfortunately it is very common. See Ramsey’s commentary on ‘The Splendor of Common Morality,’ for instance (Ramsey, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 8, 33–53).

distinction between common morality and true virtue stems from his analysis of the unique motive-structure of sanctified charity. But some preparatory terrain remains to be cleared before this argument can be unfurled to its full extent.

In what he calls the ‘positive’ similarities between true virtue and the natural principles he has analyzed, Edwards admits that they both involve something of the love of persons at their most basic level.¹⁵⁹ Though their scope is different—general and universal v. specific and limited—both sanctified and natural pity seek to relieve the distress of their object.¹⁶⁰ Both sanctified gratitude and natural gratitude seek the welfare of their object.¹⁶¹ Edwards then suggests that one very prominent reason why the average person’s benevolent affections are limited to a narrow scope is that God does not figure into their conception of morality.¹⁶² But this argument, while true to Edwards’s way of thinking, only represents a small subsection of his overall argument. In the case of natural conscience, for example, which is spoken of as the ‘best’ semblance when it comes to the approbation of virtuous traits, there is still the matter of its failure to perceive and act on the primary beauty of God’s benevolence. Edwards writes that natural conscience approves of sanctified virtues not because of their primary beauty but ‘... from a sense of the inferior and secondary beauty which there is in ... [it], consisting in uniformity; and from a sense of desert, consisting in a sense of the natural agreement of loving and being beloved, showing kindness and receiving kindness.... and a sense of evil desert, or the natural agreement there is between hating and being hated, opposing and being opposed, etc. together with a painful sensation naturally arising in a sense of self-opposition and inconsistency.’¹⁶³ But together with conscience and the appreciation of secondary beauty, the association of ideas and self-love can still generate much, if not all, of the positive content of a broad array of sanctified virtues. So there is, as we have seen, a strong observational or appearance-based reason for the persistence of the various semblances of true virtue.

Truly sanctified virtues also share with their natural semblances what Edwards calls a ‘negative’ moral goodness. ‘[T]hough the world be

¹⁵⁹ *WJE* 8, 609.

¹⁶⁰ *WJE* 8, 609.

¹⁶¹ *WJE* 8, 610. That even reciprocal good will is not enough for true friendship is an argument Aristotle makes in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, 1166b30–1167a18.

¹⁶² *WJE* 8, 611.

¹⁶³ *WJE* 8, 612.

so sinful 'tis not God's design to make it a world of punishment: and therefore has many ways made a merciful provision for men's relief in extreme calamities¹⁶⁴ God's mercy is such that the natural faculties of human beings serve to forward the goal of preventing the worst vices from taking root and so making it easier for the sanctified virtues to develop.¹⁶⁵

That sense which an awakened conscience has of the desert of sin consists chiefly in a sense of its desert of resentment of the Deity, the fountain and head of universal existence. But no wonder that by a long continued worldly and sensual life men more and more lose all sense of the Deity, who is a spiritual and invisible Being. The mind being long involved in, and engrossed by sensitive objects, become sensual in all its operations, and excludes all views and impressions of spiritual objects, and is unfit for their contemplation.¹⁶⁶

The restraint of vice brought about by the second use of the law is good both for the reprobate and for the elect. For the reprobate, it keeps the world more stable and human life from becoming, in Hobbes's famous depiction, 'solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.'¹⁶⁷ For the elect, it helps to keep temptations and distractions to a minimum so that the secondary causes of grace implicit in the creation remain visible, accessible and desirable (it cannot affect the primary causality of God's grace). True virtue and the natural virtues (semblances) may thus be said to promote the same end, the well-being of humankind,¹⁶⁸ provided that end is described very generally.

For the purposes of clarifying Edwards's use of the practical syllogism, however, a third similarity between true virtue and its various semblances is the most problematic of all. Edwards admits on several occasions throughout this work that true virtue approves and disap-

¹⁶⁴ *WJE* 8, 607–608; see also *WJE* 8, 616. Common grace and prevenient grace are appropriate terms here.

¹⁶⁵ On the place of 'common morality' or acts evocative of secondary beauty in God's providential order, see Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 198; Clyde Holbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: Univ. of Michigan Press, 1973), 63, 76; Ramsey, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 8, 33, 35.

¹⁶⁶ *WJE* 8, 614.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard E. Flathman and David Johnston (New York: W.W. Norton, 1997), 70.

¹⁶⁸ On the confluence that obtains between common morality and true virtue, see Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 114–115, 140; Roland Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 93; Holbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards*, 69–77; Ramsey, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 8, 26, 33–41.

proves of many of the same things as the natural principles we have discussed. 'He that loves Being, simply considered, will naturally ...,' for example, 'other things being equal, love particular beings in a proportion compounded of the degree of being and the degree of virtue, or benevolence to being which they have.'¹⁶⁹ The concept of true benevolence, one might say, encompasses the concept of justice. For this reason, just as often true virtue will approve of the same thing as a natural principle like justice, so will a natural principle often approve of the same thing as true virtue. 'Approbation of conscience is the more readily mistaken for a truly virtuous approbation,' Edwards writes, 'because by the wise constitution of the great Governor of the world ... when conscience is well informed, and thoroughly awakened, it agrees with the latter fully and exactly, as to the object approved, though not as to the ground and reason of approving.'¹⁷⁰ If all virtue was about approving certain actions, dispositions and character traits, there would be very little difference between true virtue and its semblances in most situations. It would only be in liminal or extreme situations where the scope of the sentiment would be revealed as insufficiently broad to encompass the universality of true virtue. Under such a description, the practical syllogism would be seriously impaired if discerning its accuracy depended on such abnormal conditions. But approbation and disapprobation is not all that constitutes virtue for Edwards. It is motive that provides the fundamental distinction allowing him to promote a rigorous use of the practical syllogism against the moral sense theorists. As Malebranche contends, '[s]o it is with all the virtues—if the love of Order is not their principle, they are false and vain, and altogether unworthy of a reasonable nature which bears the image of God Himself'¹⁷¹

Edwards does mention certain semblances of gracious affections in the *Religious Affections*, but the main issue is the admixture of obscuring influences of the natural human frame with sanctified charity.¹⁷² He further admitted certain difficulties of application in the *Religious Affections* when it came to third-person observation and detection of the proper motive behinds the habitual display of sanctified charity. But although

¹⁶⁹ *WJE* 8, 571 (italics in the original).

¹⁷⁰ *WJE* 8, 612–613. Edwards admits too much here when he subsequently finishes this thought by saying that conscience 'approves all virtue and condemns all vice' (*WJE* 8, 613).

¹⁷¹ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 53.

¹⁷² *WJE* 2, 93.

it takes place in a quite different polemical context—against Arminianism rather than antinomianism—I believe it nevertheless makes sense to read *True Virtue* as a refining of his ‘practical syllogism.’ Edwards’s demonstration of how closely true virtue may resemble its many semblances only seems to underscore how natural self-love, natural conscience, and natural instinct can coexist with truly virtuous sensibilities. Justice, as we have discussed, is particularly complex. Given the significant amount of correlation, it is natural to ask how distinctly Edwards can separate supernatural charity from its various semblances, and thus how effective the practical syllogism can be in practice.¹⁷³ This is the subject matter of the fourth part of Edwards’s argument I want to consider.

So far in the posthumously published text, Edwards has clarified why he thinks that what appear to be true virtues are actually species of self-love, natural conscience and natural instinct. He has further clarified that these sources are not ruled out *a priori* as foundations of true virtue. Indeed, as we have seen, the semblances of true virtue generated by common morality are continuous with, and can even be a type of support for, sanctified charity. ‘The most proper *evidence* of love to a created being, its arising from that temper of mind wherein consists a supreme propensity of heart to God,’ Edwards writes, ‘seems to be the agreeableness of the kind and degree of our love to *God’s end* in our creation and in the creation of all things, and the coincidence of the exercises of our love, in their manner, order, and measure, with the *manner* in which *God* himself exercises love to the creature in the creation and government of the world’¹⁷⁴ This definition is not very informative on its face, however. For it just explicitly affirms what I have suggested is the implicit theme of the *Two Dissertations*: that an analogy obtains between sanctified human agency and the divine agency evident in God’s creation of the world. The analogy between God’s love and regenerate human love, moreover, can only operate within certain limits.¹⁷⁵ Even if the requirement that truly virtuous activity be pur-

¹⁷³ Mary Ava Chamberlain discusses how the practical syllogism, even if it is valid in theory, may still be impotent on the practical level (*Jonathan Edwards Against the Antinomians and Arminians* [Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1990], 161, 188–190, 199, 203).

¹⁷⁴ *WJE* 8, 558–559; italics original.

¹⁷⁵ It is a subtle but crucial distinction for Edwards to insist that the definitional co-extension of God’s attributes and excellence do not imply a conflation of the two qualities (*WJE* 8, 460). First of all, whereas God’s end in creating the world can

sued out of the special motive of appreciating God's goodness for its own sake provides the theoretical bulwark to Edwards's 'practical syllogism,' this does not address the damaging counter-argument that true virtue is indistinguishable from its natural counterparts. Edwards stipulates that to truly love others, to behave fully virtuously, is to treat them according to their most final end or most perfect function, i.e., further emanating the divine nature (charity).¹⁷⁶ But how can the active promotion of another person's final end requisite of sanctified benevolence be distinguished from the similar effects of, for example, natural pity? If it is only in liminal or extraordinary circumstances that sanctified charity approves of different courses of action than what the natural principles can produce, the practical syllogism would seem to be largely ineffectual in every day practical matters.

To take one example Edwards considers, it indeed seems to falsify human emotion to say that it is impossible to love one's family members virtuously. Edwards clearly wants to allow for this.

When I say, true virtue consists in love to Being in general, I shall not be likely to be understood, that no one act of the mind or exercise of love is of the nature of true virtue but what has Being in general, or the great system of universal existence, for its *direct* and *immediate* object: so that no exercise of love or kind affection to any one particular being, that is but a small part of this whole, has anything of the nature of true virtue. But, that the nature of true virtue consists in a disposition to benevolence towards Being in general: though, from such a disposition may arise exercises of love to particular beings, as objects are presented and occasions arise.¹⁷⁷

And yet, his account is awkward. On one reading of a firm separation of primary and secondary beauty, Edwards's analysis of private affections does seem to disallow that one's love for family could ever be of the nature of true virtue. Even if one argues that affections within

stand as an original ultimate end, human ends are, on the whole, much more layered and mixed: (i) because of the inescapability of self-love, but also (ii) because of God's efficient causality in willing human regeneration. Second, God '... alone is absolutely self-moved' (*WJE* 8, 462); human beings can achieve only a partial self-sufficiency of action.

¹⁷⁶ Edwards identifies a caveat to this principle, i.e., one wills a person's achievement of his ultimate end unless that person is somehow opposed to Being in general (*WJE* 8, 545). Perhaps this caveat is unnecessary though in that to will and work toward a person's increase in charity could contribute to that person's moral regeneration or at least improvement without condoning his or her possible vices.

¹⁷⁷ *WJE* 8, 541; italics original.

a family are more an instinct than a species of self-love, or that it is possible to work toward the spiritual good of family members just like anyone else, if one loves them principally because they are close by birth or environment rather than because they participate in Being, then that love doesn't count as truly virtuous. The concepts of primary and secondary beauty do not themselves give his account the richness of real human action. The full ethical implications of the metaphysical distinctions raised in *End in Creation* are not fully operative in the general contrast between the appreciation of God's primary beauty and the appreciation of the various species of secondary beauty. Even with Edwards's most succinct definition of true virtue, that is to say, we are left with no easy or direct response to the Arminians' wholly natural conception of Christian righteousness (more on this in Chapter 2). It is only when Edwards's analysis of motive as an ineluctable criterion of moral praise and blame is conjoined with an Aristotelian-Neoplatonic conception of a hierarchy of ends that a separation of true virtue from its semblances forceful enough to reaffirm the practical efficacy of the syllogism can be secured.¹⁷⁸

Even if true virtue cannot be readily distinguished from its semblances on the basis of *what it approves*, it can be readily distinguished on the basis of its *grounds of approval*. Edwards specifies that when he uses terms such as 'agreeable "in itself"' and "'immediately" pleasant' in connection with true virtue it is '... to distinguish it from things which in themselves are not agreeable nor pleasant, but either indifferent or disagreeable, which yet appear eligible and agreeable indirectly for something else that is the consequence of them, or with which they are connected.'¹⁷⁹ In making the distinction between 'last ends' and 'subordinate ends' embodies this analysis Edwards is thus embodying a basic Aristotelian-Neoplatonic analysis of the diversity

¹⁷⁸ The elegant simplicity of *True Virtue* is most deceptive and frustrating at this juncture. For by withholding a detailed and sustained commentary connecting *End in Creation* and *True Virtue*, Edwards fails to make explicit the connection between the ability to perceive primary beauty and the communication of God's nature with the ability to get beyond the confines of natural principles and to achieve universality in one's benevolence. These connections are implied, however, in the manner in which he uses the concept of motive to do the final work of distinguishing true virtue from its various semblances. We must therefore piece together his analysis of motive as much from the conjoined arguments of the *Two Dissertations* as from direct passages on the subject throughout *True Virtue* itself.

¹⁷⁹ *WJE* 8, 619.

of human ends.¹⁸⁰ Such distinctions are very common in seventeenth-century scholastic-influenced Protestant theology. Often citing Aristotle and Aquinas as well as Plato, Gale invokes the concept of loving something for its own sake as indicative of an agent's last end.¹⁸¹ Only this is the aforementioned 'pondus' or ultimate directionality of the will.¹⁸² Edwards identifies as a 'last end' '... whatsoever any agent has in view in anything he does, which he loves, or which is an immediate gratification of any appetite or inclination of nature, and is agreeable to him in itself, and not merely for the sake of something else'¹⁸³ A subordinate end, straightforwardly, 'is sought only for the sake of something else.'¹⁸⁴ Just as it is necessary to sift through the many layers of related ends revealed in the divine will through the creation of the world, Edwards recognizes that individual human actions are fitted together in lifelong chains of actions. The term 'chief end' sits along side the subordinate/last distinction as a modifier for an agent's intended end in an action. Similarly, the term 'ultimate end' sits along side the subordinate/last distinction as a modifier for what an impartial observer with a bird's eye view would regard as the final end of all an agent's activity (potentially obscured from the agent's own self-reflection). 'Ultimate ends' are subsequently distinguished in terms of 'original and independent ultimate ends' and 'consequential and dependent ultimate ends.' The latter distinction is meant to capture how the ends of an agent may change over time—so that what was a guiding end for even a long period of time might be shifted subtly to the status of a secondary, though still ultimate end, i.e., ahead of all other subordinate ends though eclipsed (perhaps only slightly) by another ultimate end. Edwards gives a good example of this in the case of a man for whom the (original ultimate) end of raising a family was eclipsed by (the consequential ultimate) end of wanting peace and stability to reign within the family he subsequently had.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁰ In each action there is the last end in pursuing it and any subordinate ends that may serve as a means to that (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1094a18–24). Richard Kraut discusses this idea in *Aristotle on the Human Good* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1989), 200–207, 213–220, 225–241.

¹⁸¹ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 11.

¹⁸² Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 27.

¹⁸³ *WJE* 8, 411.

¹⁸⁴ *WJE* 8, 411.

¹⁸⁵ *WJE* 8, 413.

Motive is, again, key. Edwards makes the classic Christian distinction between loving God and virtue for their own sake and loving God and virtue for the sake of some further end. Those who truly love God and virtue love the primary beauty that connects them, ‘... there is no need of anything higher, or of anything in any respect diverse, to determine the mind to approve and be pleased with equal uniformity and proportion among spiritual things which are equally discerned.’¹⁸⁶ Edwards is not arguing that aesthetic judgments are out of place in the discourse of moral theology. Quite the contrary, he shares the excitement of the time in expressing God’s excellences in terms of beauty.¹⁸⁷ What he objects to is what he regards as the misplaced hierarchy of ends. God is not to be enjoyed because the divine nature embodies symmetries; symmetries are to be enjoyed because they issue from God’s inherently beautiful nature.¹⁸⁸ He does then want to rule out natural sources of moral insight as true virtue on the basis of their limited scope and their failure to appreciate God’s primary beauty for its own sake. Irving Singer captures well how Bernard of Clairvaux’s treatment of the stages of mystical assent reflects different degrees of love indicative of such a distinction. ‘To love God himself, as a divine person rather than a source of human benefits,’ for instance, ‘is not yet to love him in the spiritual manner Bernard wishes to achieve In the fourth [and highest] degree man loves nothing, neither himself nor God, except *for the sake of God*, i.e., in reference and relation *to God*.’¹⁸⁹ A consequence of this for Edwards is that insofar as charity is a part of the divine nature shared and replicated in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, certain formal similarities obtain between God’s love and regenerate human love. Gale shares both the first premise and the second. The truly virtuous person loves all proximate goods appropriate to the mediate valuation they receive because of their relationship to God as the last end.¹⁹⁰ In so doing,

¹⁸⁶ *WJE* 8, 573. The argument that the kind of person who preponderates towards goodness would above all demonstrate a love of God for its own sake is also present in *Original Sin* (*WJE* 3, 144).

¹⁸⁷ See Robert E. Norton, *The Beautiful Soul: Aesthetic Morality in the Eighteenth Century* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1995), 1–54, 100–136.

¹⁸⁸ William C. Spohn, ‘Sovereign Beauty: Jonathan Edwards and the Nature of True Virtue,’ *Theological Studies* 42 (Sept. 1981): 416.

¹⁸⁹ Irving Singer, *The Nature of Love*, 2nd edition, Vol. 1, *From Plato to Luther* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 190; italics original.

¹⁹⁰ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 13.

the virtuous soul ‘fals under no coarctation or confinement, either in regard of *Principe*, or *End*, or *Rule*; but partakes in its measure, of that Amplitude, which its Principe, End and Rule rejoiceth in.’¹⁹¹ Malebranche puts the issue even more pointedly. He explicitly states that ethics is the science of ‘changing the act which passes away without converting us [a “momentary movement of Love of Order which the Holy Spirit inspires in us”], into the habit which remains and justifies us.’¹⁹² With this background in mind, we may now answer how, in Edwards, the active promotion of another person’s final end requisite of sanctified benevolence can be distinguished from the similar effects of, for example, natural pity.

Recall that pity is another type of natural instinct that Edwards admits is capable of producing sentiments akin to sanctified benevolence. Though of a non-sanctified source, natural pity can yield an approbation of virtues like humanity and mercy and a disapprobation of vices like cruelty and oppression (which presumably true virtue would also maintain).¹⁹³ But just as in the previous instances of natural human faculties, natural instinct is ruled out as a basis for true virtue because of its limited scope. While one can certainly envision a limited range for the natural pity humankind has—we feel more pity for those close to us, for those who are like us, and those whose interests are wrapped up with our own, than for a stranger or someone who opposes our interests—Edwards pursues at greater length the more interesting line of showing how pity can be ruled out as true virtue on the basis of its foundation in the appreciation of secondary beauty. Granting what is perhaps the weakest point in the argument for the moral sense (that one could naturally feel pity for one’s enemies), he considers some of its limitations.

Yea, pity may not only be without benevolence but may consist with true malevolence, or with such ill will as shall cause men not only not to desire the positive happiness of another, but even to desire his calamity. They may pity such an one when his calamity goes beyond their hatred. A man may have true malevolence towards another, desiring no positive good for him, but evil: and yet his hatred not be infinite, but only to a certain degree. And when he sees the person whom he thus hates in misery far beyond his ill will, he may then pity him: because then the natural instinct begins to operate. For malevolence will not overcome the natural

¹⁹¹ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 103; italics original.

¹⁹² Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 99.

¹⁹³ *WJE* 8, 608.

instinct inclining to pity others in extreme calamity any further than it goes, or to the limits of the degree of misery it wishes to its object.¹⁹⁴

This also calls attention to the private nature of such pity. It is perfectly within the bounds of virtue, according to Edwards's characterization of the moral sense theorists, to withhold a proportionate degree of pity from those who have harmed us. Our natural pity is bounded by our interests and perhaps those whose interests are conjoined with ours. 'Pure benevolence,' as he notes in the next chapter, 'would be sufficient to excite pity to another in calamity, if there were no particular instinct, or any other principle determining the mind thereto And this is a source of pity far more extensive than the other.'¹⁹⁵ If '[i]ndeed most of the duties incumbent on us, if well considered, will be found to partake of the nature of justice,'¹⁹⁶ and we are only accused and/or restrained by our conscience for violating symmetrical relations, then it is only possible to isolate the operation of our pity in situations that go beyond symmetry. But what Edwards is calling attention to in this discussion is that even though it does not straightforwardly embody it the operation of natural pity is still dependent upon the appreciation of symmetry. For again, in Edwards's depiction of the moral sense, we only feel pity toward those whose misery in calamity extends beyond what they deserve in proportion to the perceived ill done by them to others. Only if we wish them to be harmed more than they harmed others would it violate our conscience and thus be an occasion for our natural pity to censure or moderate our affections. Though we might congratulate ourselves for 'pitying our enemies' on such occasions, it can hardly be an instance of true virtue that is compatible with a certain degree of malevolence. No malevolence can be present in a love of God and neighbor for their own sake, not even a malevolence within the 'acceptable' limits of justice and conscience.

The manner in which a natural moral instinct like pity '... may not only be without benevolence but may coexist with true malevolence' brings its discordance with the special motive-structure of sanctified charity into high relief.¹⁹⁷ First, whereas natural pity only goes out to a person in calamity if that calamity goes beyond their desert for perceived wrongs committed, virtuous pity goes out to the person in all

¹⁹⁴ *WJE* 8, 606–607.

¹⁹⁵ *WJE* 8, 616.

¹⁹⁶ *WJE* 8, 569.

¹⁹⁷ *WJE* 8, 606.

degrees of calamity. Second, while ‘... persons [exemplifying natural pity] may greatly pity those that are in extreme pain, whose positive pleasure they may still be very indifferent about,’¹⁹⁸ true benevolence is able to rejoice as much in the neighbor’s ‘disproportionate’ joy as it is able to feel pity at the neighbor’s ‘disproportionate’ suffering. The sympathy of true benevolence is, thus, not limited to an attenuated portion of the full spectrum of another person’s well-being. Natural affections like pity can only generate the appropriate response at parts of this spectrum. They show themselves to be deficient in the dual sympathies of rejoicing in the neighbor’s flourishing and pitying the neighbor’s diminution.¹⁹⁹ True virtue embodies charitable affections that respond to the human potential for union with God throughout the spectrum of possible contingencies—both moderate and extreme prosperity, both moderate and extreme calamity, both deserved and undeserved prosperity or calamity—and involve an active disposition to put into practice courses of actions that maximize this potential. In highlighting the limitations of natural pity, Edwards thereby seeks to minimize the portion of the spectrum of moral activity in which natural virtue is indistinguishable from true virtue. Even if with respect to appearances true virtue can be distinguished from its semblances only at the extremes of this spectrum, Edwards maintains that their distinguishability is comprehensive when it comes to their motive-structure.²⁰⁰ At the very least, he is confident that expanding one’s conception of moral agency to include not just the content of an act’s outward appearance but the kind of detailed analysis of motive that can appreciate for-its-own-sake-ness substantially increases the contrasting profile of true virtue and its various semblances.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ *WJE* 8, 606.

¹⁹⁹ Although Edwards does not develop it as fully in this text as in others, there is definitely room here for the traditional Christian qualification that not all worldly prosperity advances one’s spiritual fulfillment and not all worldly disappointments are to be spiritually rued.

²⁰⁰ Edwards suggests in his writings on church membership that in the final analysis it is easier to judge between the godly and the ungodly than it is to judge between the morally sincere and the morally insincere. This is because of the more intricate gradations of meaning in sincerity when compared with the ‘all or nothing’ criteria posed by the difficulty of being a ‘disciple indeed’ (*WJE* 12, 261–262, 299, 492–493).

²⁰¹ If there is a weakness in the *Two Dissertations* it is that Edwards does not bring this last (and I believe most important) argument out more forcefully. It is raised at the beginning of the final chapter, but then he unadvisedly responds to a debate outside the main area of his concerns: that between Wollaston and Hume on the matter of whether judgments of praise or blame lie in the nature of rationality or human

Conclusions: Aristotelian, Neoplatonic, and Perfectionistic

When Edwards sets out in the *Religious Affections* ‘to show the nature and signs of the gracious operations of God’s Spirit, by which they are to be distinguished from all things whatsoever that the minds of men are the subjects of, which are not of a saving nature’ we have seen that his principal answer is Christian practice.²⁰² But if he gave an abundance of answers with regard to the *signs* of regeneration in this first mature work—the habits, dispositions, tempers of mind, etc., which accompany gracious affections—he does not give a sustained account of the *nature* of gracious affections or true virtue until his last. That is to say, it is not *any* description of Christian practice that constitutes the sanctification upon which basis one can rightfully infer justification, but *only* a description that appreciates how God must communicate the divine nature to the human agent if the partial goodness implicit in the world is to be fully actualized. In so doing, in seeking to protect the practical syllogism from mollification, Edwards provides us with an opportunity to forcefully resist the apparent similarities between his conception of virtue and ‘benevolism’ or other species of Enlightenment moral philosophy. *True Virtue*, with the proviso that it be read against the background of the metaphysical distinctions made in *End in Creation*, may then be regarded as a further clarification of the twelfth sign of truly gracious affections established in the *Religious Affections*.

In later chapters, I shall be claiming the concept of the practical syllogism we have developed is at the very heart of not only Edwards’s ethics but of his theology writ large. In so doing I will be arguing for an interpretation of Edwards’s ethical position that incorporates certain some Reformed doctrinal patterns familiar to students of American Calvinism but places others at a further remove from what I take to be the ‘core’ ideas revolving around the mature published treatises. At this early juncture in the argument, however, I want to recognize that the practical syllogism does not all by itself exclude some of main

emotional/passional sensibilities. As a result, interpreters often relegate his view that all moral judgments are subordinate to the love of God (*WJE* 8, 553–554, 556–557, 560) to the status of a simplistic assertion about the necessity of God for Christian ethics. It might also have helped to cement the connections between *End in Creation* and *True Virtue* in that this is the most significant feature of the analogy between divine agency in creating the world and the special (supernaturally enhanced) moral agency of human beings in fellowship with God.

²⁰² *WJE* 2, 89.

theological *loci* within a broad Reformed concern about works righteousness. That is to say, looked at without recourse to a deeper philosophical analysis of the constitutive elements that make up Edwards's ethical position, the requirements that saints be highly virtuous is ubiquitous. Emphatically, it cannot itself prove that Edwards departed in any wholesale way from the general sweep of even narrow Calvinism. But it also needs to be said as emphatically that it does not guarantee Edwards's irremovable place in this orbit either. Portions of the logic of this position elliptically swing in and out of this orbit. The challenge remains to provide a cartography for the uncharted terrain connecting 'the moral sense' and 'Calvinism' which can nevertheless eliminate the portions of each indefensible as Edwards's position. It is to this work that we now turn.

CHAPTER TWO

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S TENANCY EXPANDED

Virtue as the 'Sign of Signs' and Imputed Righteousness

In Chapter 1 I connected Edwards's use of the practical syllogism—inferring justification from the sanctified habit of grace made possible by God's unmerited gift of the Holy Spirit's indwelling—to his argument against the antinomian edge of revivalism in the *Religious Affections* as well as to his critique of the Arminian thrust of moral sense theory in the *Two Dissertations*. In taking up Edwards's stance toward the distinction between imputed and inherent righteousness, we are afforded a further opportunity to connect the opposing polemics of the two texts. The present chapter deals more exclusively with the *Two Dissertations*. We shall here be concerned with how emphasizing God's efficacious causality has the potential to vitiate the normative guidelines embodied in the practical syllogism by bypassing the normal substrate of the volitional structure of the human person. What constitutes persons as saints, in the imputed view, is God's calling them such; not even subsequent to the receipt of saving grace can any definitive distinction between the moral lives of the regenerate and the upright unregenerate be observed. For Edwards, I am venturing to establish, the locus of God's regenerative activity is the communication of God's own nature (love) to the ethico-religious make-up of the recipient of grace. I am arguing he is strongly committed in the *Two Dissertations* to a conception of Christian righteousness as substantially *inherent* despite those respects in which it remains concurrently *imputed*. A brief treatment of the development of Edwards's position in light of philosophical and theological options available to him expedites the articulation of the particular balance he chose as his own.

I argued in Chapter 1 that he relies very heavily on Christian Aristotelian arguments but still appreciably on some Christian Neoplatonic arguments to counter both the radical revivalists' conception of immediate illumination and the conception of virtue forwarded in moral sense theory. In this chapter's treatment of the *Two Dissertations*, a dif-

ferent intellectual context draws our attention: the relationship between God and the creation, what philosophers call the debate between the ‘voluntarists’ and ‘intellectualists.’ A detailed treatment of this debate is considerably beyond the scope of this study.¹ In order to appreciate what ethical options Edwards was entertaining and adopting in the *Two Dissertations*, however, it is necessary to appreciate how the more theologically circumscribed portion of this Anglo-American debate reflects the synthesis between Christian Platonism and/or Neoplatonism and the Aristotelianism outlined in the Introduction. The Cambridge Platonists are the principal source for the development of what I called Edwards’s *metaphysics of goodness* as well as a substantial source for what I called his *moral psychology of habit*. For the very general historical purposes set out in Chapter 1—showing that Edwards had available to him the type of vocabulary and arguments Augustine, Boethius, and Aquinas employed before him—a brief sketch of those aspects of Cambridge Platonism likely to have influenced Edwards will be sufficient.²

We will begin by setting out how the Puritan context embodied the philosophical issues at stake in the inherent/imputed distinction. I will make prominent use of Janice Knight’s typology of the ‘Intellectual Fathers’ and ‘Spiritual Brethren.’ We will then trace the development of Edwards’s own ethical position from the earlier revivalist writings (in which an imputed view is favored) to the more inherantist view in the *Two Dissertations*. A span of ‘Miscellanies’ entries will supplement my account. With our entrance into the mature corpus, we will gain still further philosophical detail by contextualizing the *Two Dissertations*

¹ The reader is here referred to Stephen Darwall, *The British Moralists and the Internal ‘Ought’ 1640–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); J.B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy: A History of Modern Moral Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); and Thomas M. Lennon ‘The Cartesian Dialectic of Creation,’ in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 331–362.

² As Fiering shows, Henry More was a very important part of the Harvard ethics curriculum from 1690 to 1730 (*Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* [Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1981], 246–279). Yale, however, did not use the *Enchiridion ethicum* until the early 1720s. The Dummer gift to Yale, one of the founding donations of the library, included More’s complete works (ibid., 252). Fiering notes that Edwards probably did not read Ralph Cudworth until very late in his life (Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought in its British Context* [Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published by the University of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1981], 47). Douglas Elwood suggests that Edwards read John Smith’s *Discourses* before 1746 (*The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1960], 100).

against the backdrop of Cambridge Platonism and its place between Westminster Calvinism and Deism on the relationship between God and the creation. The result is a vision of how Edwards's primarily inherentist view of Christian righteousness allows him to bridge the polemical gap between the fires of the 1740s revivals where he forged his practical syllogism and the anti-Arminian writings of the 1750s. Such foundations will have to undergo qualification when we follow trajectories on other topics from the early and mid-career output into such mature writings as the treatises on freedom of the will, original sin, *Life of Brainerd* and the ecclesiastical writings. But the broad contours of the consolidated ethical position outlined here will survive the fine-tuning process basically intact.

Tensions in Calvin, Puritan Responses, and Edwards's Revival Writings

Again, a brief look at Puritan writers Edwards can be expected to have read helps to set up the philosophical issues at stake in his developing views on how to balance the competing claims of imputed and inherent righteousness. Consistent with a confidence in the created order and the dignity of the human person as a special part of that order, the contingent of American Puritans Janice Knight has termed 'Intellectual Fathers' tended to see righteousness as more inherent than imputed.³ We have the benefit of Ames's direct comments on the subject. '4. Virtue,' he writes, 'is a condition or habit ... by which the will is inclined to do well 6. It is called a habit not only because one possesses it but also because it makes the subject behave in a certain manner, i.e., it moves the faculty, which otherwise would not be so moved, toward good.'⁴ As Ames continues his description, he stipulates that though it is not 'the very dispositions inhering in us ... themselves making us acceptable to God,' such an affirmation would create some tension with the doctrine of justification by faith, nevertheless '[t]he dispositions become part of a good man and goodness is

³ I am again using the typology developed by Janice Knight in *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994). See also E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 46.

⁴ William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology* [2. 2. 4, 6], translated from the third Latin edition, 1629. and edited by John D. Eusden (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1968), 224.

thus derived from them into our actions.⁵ Ames subsequently invokes human depravity by noting that '[t]he best works of the faithful have an imperfection which needs restoration,' but he is quick to qualify this with 'yet the works themselves are not sins.'⁶ Although he draws the line of human striving at 'a confirmed and perfect constitution of mind ... such a degree of virtue is seldom granted to men in this life,' he does not shrink from affirming the slightly modified prospect of 'a state of mind of various degrees of perfection.'⁷ American Puritan Samuel Willard is equally clear that the transformation that marks regeneration and faith is conveyed as a habit in human beings. 'Though the ability is from God,' Willard writes, 'yet it is an ability that he hath infused into the man, and made his.'⁸ More than Ames, however, Willard regards fluctuations in the waxing and waning of this habit as resultant of divine agency rather than of deficiencies in the human substrate of that divinely implanted habit. While grace is 'in this Life nourished by means, and the blessing of God upon them, and our careful improving of them ... [s]ometimes God withdraws his influence from it, and doth not afford that blessing on the means, without which they will not nourish it, and then it languisheth.'⁹ Theophilus Gale, much commented on in the last chapter, also takes a more univocal view of the sustenance of the kind of virtue indicative of God's favor. 'Doth not the first Cause give forth actual assistances usually according to the measure of our actual dependence on him? If he drop not in every moment new spirits and influences, how soon do al moral Virtues wither and die away?'¹⁰ The English Puritan Thomas Manton, however, adopts a more co-operative mode of human and divine efforts coinciding. After distinguishing the general 'Orthodox' (read Reformed) gloss on James 5:22 from the 'Papist' gloss, he regards the 'most simple and suitable' account to be '[t]hat faith co-working with obedience is *made perfect*, that is, bettered and improved; as the inward vigour of the spirits is increased by motion and exercise'¹¹

⁵ Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 2. 2. 9; ed. Eusden, 225.

⁶ Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 2. 3. 36; ed. Eusden, 236.

⁷ Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 2. 2. 5; ed. Eusden, 224.

⁸ Samuel Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity* (Boston: 1726; New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), 458.

⁹ Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity*, 517.

¹⁰ Theophilus Gale, Theophilus Gale, *Court of the Gentiles: ... Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie* (London: By J. Macock, for Thomas Cockeril, 1677), 92.

¹¹ Thomas Manton, *A Practical Commentary: an exposition with notes on the epistle of James* (London, 1651), 323.

'[W]orks do not perfect faith by communication and imputation of their perfection to it,' he concludes, 'but by stirring, exercising and intending the natural vigour of it.'¹²

The distinctive temper of inherent virtue swirling in different ways through these examples becomes even clearer when compared with a similar statement from Calvin's Confession of Faith for the citizens and inhabitants of Geneva (1536): 'regeneration is so effected in us that, until we slough off this mortal body, there remains always in us much imperfection and infirmity, so that we always remain poor and wretched sinners in the presence of God.... [T]here will never be plenitude of perfection while we will live here.'¹³ There is the concern that drawing the connection between justification and sanctification too heavily will derogate from the free nature of the covenant of grace, and, finally, deteriorate into the views of works and merit he sought to counteract. Consistent with their rejection of the will as an instrumental cause of grace, most of the 'Spiritual Brethren,' the other 'orthodoxy' Knight identifies alongside the 'Intellectual Fathers' of American Puritanism, emphasized imputed righteousness even as they granted inherent righteousness a background validity. That is to say, they do not grant inherent goodness to any aspect of human nature—whether it be a faculty like the will or the intellect or a moral quality such as virtue. Perhaps because he genuinely found this aspect of antinomianism untenable or perhaps because it was a political concession he made to retain his position in the church,¹⁴ John Cotton rejected this most radical manifestation of the doctrine of imputed righteousness; it is not only Christ's indwelling within the person that bestows value to religiously motivated action. In this case, the only religiously significant quality inherent in the human person would be the raw potential to be a host for the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ Cotton admits that agents' virtues may be

¹² Manton, *A Practical Commentary*, 323; italics original.

¹³ Arthur C. Cochrane, ed., *Reformed Confessions of the 16th Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 122.

¹⁴ Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 36.

¹⁵ This articulation of the 'Spiritist' position is more extreme than Calvin's view, of course. Although Calvin does adhere to a view of Christian righteousness as imputed, he would object vociferously to any notion of being free from the law: '[f]or God considers that he is revered by no work of ours unless we truly do it in reverence toward him. But how can this be done amidst all this dread, where one doubts where God is offended or honored by our works?' (John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960], 837;

said to be their 'possession' in some sense.¹⁶ For '[i]f there be no spirituall gifts of grace in the soule united to Christ,' i.e., if the virtues were not in the saint's possession, 'then in every good action the Holy Ghost acts immediately [upon] the naturall faculties and affections to supernaturall effects: (as suppose he then acteth immediately my naturall love to the supernaturall love of God).'¹⁷ But this cannot be the case, Cotton argues: 'the Holy Ghost in every good action doth not turn the course of my faculty and affection against their proper and voluntary bent; For then we should not do good actions voluntarily, and then they would be unwelcome and grievous to us'¹⁸ Scripture requires for Cotton that good actions, at least those rewarded by God, be voluntary and enjoyed by the agent.¹⁹ If certain of his more radical counterparts among the 'Spiritual Brethren' felt no scruples on this count, Cotton, for his part, retains the broadly shared view that virtuous habits and holy dispositions at least partially inhere within the saint's human nature.

A full discussion of these trajectories in Puritan thought must await Chapter 3; but in the meantime it is helpful to observe that one way of describing the development of his mature ethical position would be to say that Edwards began to adopt a more 'inherent' view of Christian righteousness the further he shifted to the type of view on secondary causality held by Knight's 'Intellectual Fathers' from the less restrictive type of view on the efficacy of God's transforming love held by Knight's 'Spiritual Brethren.' Whereas the concept of imputed righteousness is often cited throughout the 'Miscellanies,' it is also important to note that within the first fifteen entries, the concept of infused habits is employed to distinguish various stages along the path of regeneration, there being 'a last moment of his being bad and a first moment of ... being good, a last moment of his being in a state of damnation and a first moment of his being in a state of salvation.'²⁰ He subsequently affirms in an entry on infused grace that '[t]hose that deny infusion by the Holy Spirit, must of necessity deny the Spirit to

III, xix, 5). In many instances, moreover, it strongly violates Calvin's warnings against spiritual pride.

¹⁶ John Cotton, *The Covenant of Gods Free Grace* (London: Printed by M.S. for John Hancock, 1645; New York: AMS, 1983), 27.

¹⁷ Cotton, *Covenant of Gods Free Grace*, 32.

¹⁸ Cotton, *Covenant of Gods Free Grace*, 32–33.

¹⁹ Cotton cites 1 Job. 5:3 and 1 Cor. 9:17 to this effect (*Covenant of Free Grace*, 33).

²⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 'I', *WJE* 13, 168–169.

do anything at all.²¹ Cited together with the affirmation that 'conversion is wrought in a moment' we have an affirmation that it is only in exceptional cases that 'the Spirit of God takes a man in his career in sin, without any forethought, or foreconcern or any such thing, or any preparatory circumstances to introduce it.'²² The imputation of Christ's righteousness is affirmed but without the very common stipulation that saved and damned are not distinguishable on the basis of pre-conversion levels of spiritual attainment. Edwards argues instead that 'those that have a stronger faith are more closely united to Christ, and so shall enjoy him, his righteousness and his glory, more intensely'²³ In 'Miscellanies' No. 66 Edwards reaffirms that he is not subscribing to a vision of justification as exclusively imputed. Rather, justification involves 'also that inherent holiness that is in the heart of the Christian'²⁴ He is quick to qualify, however, that this grace, while inhering within the character, is not caused by human agency but 'entirely communicated from God through Jesus Christ.'²⁵ In 'Miscellanies' No. 147 (137), Edwards seems to recognize that it is possible that an interlocutor might object that such a state would not count as a virtue, being completely caused 'immediately by the power of God' and not 'repeated acts of holiness,' but he asserts that 'it is virtue notwithstanding.'²⁶ There are passages from the early corpus where Edwards seems to take a step back even from such a minimal emphasis on inherent righteousness as this. A 'Notes on Scripture' entry on John 16:8–11 from five years later focuses a great deal of attention on Christ's satisfaction for sin and the need of Christ's intercession to remove guilt (No. 134).²⁷ He depicts their 'necessary and immutable connection with

²¹ 'Miscellanies' No. 'p', *WJE* 13, 171.

²² 'Miscellanies' No. 'r', *WJE* 13, 173.

²³ 'Miscellanies' No. 's', *WJE* 13, 174.

²⁴ 'Miscellanies' No. 66, *WJE* 13, 236.

²⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 66, *WJE* 13, 236. It is beyond the scope of my inquiry to consider the precise formulation of this communication within the trinity, e.g., to what extent it comes through Christ's obedience ('Miscellanies' No. 261), and in any case, we have Edwards's subsequent comment that '[t]he sum of all that Christ purchased is the Holy Ghost' ('Miscellanies' No. 402, *WJE* 13, 466). On Edwards's theology of the trinity see Amy Plantinga Pauw, *The Supreme Harmony of All: The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002); and Sang Hyun Lee, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 21, 6–38.

²⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 147 (137), *WJE* 13, 300.

²⁷ 'Notes on Scripture' No. 134, *WJE* 15, 88. The dating is by Stein ('Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 15, 44–45).

faith, as immediately flowing from the nature of it.²⁸ This is so much the case that Edwards affirms that ‘salvation is, to be made holy, to have the image of God, to have God’s Spirit, and the love of God, etc.; God offers us no other salvation.’²⁹ Nevertheless, despite this necessary correlation in the metaphysical relationship between salvation and holiness, Edwards is quick to qualify that obedience cannot be that ‘something in some persons, that God has respect to as being that in them, which as he accounts renders it a meet thing, that they should be as reputed as being in Christ and adjudged rather than others, for Christ’s sake, to that freedom from punishment and to that eternal life which Christ purchased’³⁰ ‘... [O]bedience can’t be set upon a level with faith in this matter’³¹ In later entries, the case of the connection between salvation and holiness will be made more on the basis of their inherent (non-arbitrary) connection in the nature of things. In the one case God could have decided to make holiness unrelated to salvation, in the other, this is not possible because holiness is God’s nature communicated to the regenerate person by means of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. It is a non-contradictory part of God’s nature itself.

In ‘Miscellanies’ No. 669, which Ava Chamberlain dates in or after Nov. 1734,³² Edwards claims that ‘faith comprehends the whole of that by which we are justified, or by which we come to have an interest in Christ; and there is nothing else that has a parallel concern with it in the affair of our salvation.’³³ There is an interesting qualification here, however—a qualification that gains momentum as the entries unfold—of a ‘moral fitness’ between the benefits of grace vis-à-vis justification and the fruits of grace vis-à-vis sanctification. ‘Though God’s forgiving us and showing us mercy,’ Edwards notes, ‘is not for any worthiness in our forgiving or showing mercy ... yet God’s denying forgiveness and mercy may properly be for the unworthiness and ill-deserving of our refusing to forgive and to show mercy’³⁴ In the next entry, he reaffirms that ‘Christ’s righteousness and the saint’s inherent holiness are far from having a parallel concern in this affair,’ that is, they

²⁸ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 412, *WJE* 13, 472.

²⁹ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 412, *WJE* 13, 472.

³⁰ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 412, *WJE* 13, 473.

³¹ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 412, *WJE* 13, 473.

³² Chamberlain, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 18, 48.

³³ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 669, *WJE* 18, 213.

³⁴ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 670, *WJE* 18, 223.

are not of equal importance. And yet, he also makes the even more substantive qualification that '[t]he sum of salvation includes the saints' conversion, and justification, and holiness, and good works, and also their consequent happiness.'³⁵

Edwards begins to develop a more nuanced view of the diversity of divine and human excellences jointly making up the justified character in 'Miscellanies' No. 712. He there admits that '[t]here is indeed something in man that is really and spiritually good, that is prior in the order of nature to justification, viz. faith.'³⁶ This spiritual goodness is faith and not charity, and Edwards does qualify that God does not *accept* anything human 'as goodness till after justification,' but it is significant as a qualification of the earlier stipulation that everything spiritually good in humans is coextensive with divine communication by God.³⁷ In 'Miscellanies' No. 793, which comes after a substantial reflection on how the refiner's fire of trials reveals the distinctive nature of the true saints' excellences, Edwards even more substantially admits the importance of works in the *ordo salutis*. It is certainly possible that God could have designed the creation otherwise, but the fact remains that God's pleasure was to ordain the strong connection between salvation and good works. It is interesting to consider, then, in 'Miscellanies' No. 831, that when Edwards responds to the supposition by some that his 'natural fitness' argument 'seems to suppose that a believer's being justified has its foundation in nature, and not in God's pleasure,' he does not alter the locution 'in nature' but rather reaffirms the whole ordained system of nature (in which all seeking salvation rely upon a Savior) as dependent upon God's pleasure.³⁸ Entries 845 and 846 return to the theme of imputation in substantively taking up the propitiation and satisfaction of Christ's sacrifice. But in the reflection on Scriptural precedents loosely connected with Mark 10: 51–52, entry No. 847 from mid-1740 is careful to indicate that an obedience-intensive conception of regeneration must be subsequent to the 'first act of faith.'³⁹ But inso-

³⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 671, *WJE* 18, 224.

³⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 712, *WJE* 18, 341.

³⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 712, *WJE* 18, 341.

³⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 831, *WJE* 18, 543. We shall discuss at some length the overtones in Edwards of the classic scholastic distinction between God's absolute and ordained powers (*dei potentia absoluta* and *dei potentia ordinata*) in Chapter 3. Passages such as these are indicative that he found at least some room for the latter.

³⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 847, *WJE* 20, 70.

far as there is a moral component to the Matt 18: 3 requirement in that 'by being born again ... men become little children, or newborn babes,' he seems to leave room for obedience being so centrally a part of what faith is that the covenant of grace is not fulfilled without it.⁴⁰ After describing regeneration as 'that work of God's Spirit, whereby the soul is brought back from that state of sin into which we fell by the first apostasy of mankind, and [the Spirit] restoring it to its former state of holiness ... gradually through the whole work of the sanctification of the Spirit,' Edwards insists that the 'destruction and death' of the soul fallen in sin and the sanctified soul of the 'new birth' 'are so related one to another, that one is to be measured by the other: one consists in the removal of the other, and in restoring the soul from the other.'⁴¹

The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God (1741), Edwards's second major treatment of the revivals, represents a first step in the direction of his later position in the published corpus of full-length works. The first, and most important, component of Edwards's critique of overly 'Spiritist' religiosity is that the ordinary fruits of the spirit are necessary or intrinsic to the nature of what God communicates in sending the spirit. Whereas the extraordinary fruits of the Spirit are accidental or occasional to it, 'the grace of the Spirit ... summarily consists in charity or divine love.'⁴² It was love that motivated the sending of the Holy Spirit and love that was the message sent. Grace is the capacity to love God and neighbor instilled or augmented by God. The saints are made 'partakers' of divine nature.⁴³ Charity is thus closer to the nature of God's revelation, i.e., closer to God's nature, than any gifts of prophecy or speaking in tongues. 'God communicates himself in his own nature more to the soul in saving grace in the heart, than in all miraculous gifts.'⁴⁴

Not only are these extraordinary gifts unrelated to the true nature of God (and by extension the true nature of human righteousness), they represent an immature state of religious reflection. Edwards refers to the church during the apostolic age, where extraordinary fruits of the

⁴⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 847, *WJE* 20, 70.

⁴¹ 'Miscellanies' No. 847, *WJE* 20, 71.

⁴² *WJE* 4, 278. This argument reappears in *Some Thoughts Concerning the present Revival of Religion in New-England ...* (*WJE* 4, 464–465).

⁴³ *WJE* 4, 280.

⁴⁴ *WJE* 4, 278.

spirit were putatively more common, as in its 'infancy.' In its more mature state, he argues, such effulgences are not necessary.⁴⁵ So we see in this second argument a reaffirmation of his first. But what is it about the extraordinary fruits of the Spirit that represents an immaturity in religious reflection? It is the observation that it is only an immature faith which expects the Spirit's indwelling and fullest manifestation upon the Millennium to be accompanied by extraordinary events: '... [the Apostle] speaks of such an adult state ... [in this world as well as in heaven] wherein those three things, faith, hope and charity, should abide or remain after miracles and revelations had ceased'⁴⁶ Why should one, Edwards ponders, need signs unrelated to the divine nature in order to acknowledge the Spirit's presence and activity? The evidence of faith, hope and charity, because they are the most direct manifestations of the Spirit and more central to God's nature, should be sufficient.

Edwards's third reason for raising the ordinary fruits of the spirit over the extraordinary in this early work is that he thought the latter were only subordinate ends, i.e., subordinate to the regenerating activity of the Spirit as a primary end. Similar to the second reason, this is a reaffirmation and deepening of the first step of the argument. For it is in the moral transformation of the person toward greater charity that he or she comes more to resemble and participate in the nature of God. Without moral transformation, divine grace would not be fully communicated, and the soul would remain unfit for final communion with God. 'Salvation and the eternal enjoyment of God is promised to divine grace, but not to inspiration,' Edwards insists, 'a man may have those extraordinary gifts, and yet be abominable to God, and go to hell'⁴⁷ Extraordinary influences are not, in other words, good in and of themselves; they are good only incidentally, 'swallowed up in the sun of divine love' like 'all those stars and moon, with the reflected light they gave in the night'⁴⁸ Again, Edwards believes the most fundamental description of the 'sanctifying influences of the Spirit' is the communication of God's nature to human beings, humanity's partaking in the nature of God through the exercise of the theological virtues. Faith,

⁴⁵ *WJE* 4, 280.

⁴⁶ *WJE* 4, 281.

⁴⁷ *WJE* 4, 279.

⁴⁸ *WJE* 4, 280.

hope, and charity are part of the nature of God whereas speaking in tongues and the like are accidental or, as Edwards puts it in his next work, ‘occasional’ effects of the secondary causes of the God’s redeeming activity in the revivals.⁴⁹

Although definitely begun, Edwards’s critique of this aspect of the ‘antinomianism’ features of the imputed conception of righteousness is not yet fully formed in the *Distinguishing Marks*. He does express the view that there can be no final separation of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and development of the disposition to act charitably. Indeed, given the rewards of a truly godly life, the life of affections ordered toward charity, he wonders why so many of the converted sought ‘any higher kind of intercourse with heaven’⁵⁰ If charity is not just imputed, but indeed inheres within the saint, he then argues that it must at some level be visible. The sanctified agent must be able to be distinguished from the unregenerate agent on the basis of the intensity, longevity, and consistency of humble or benevolent affections. While Edwards does exhort the charitable humility of the saints in the *Distinguishing Marks*, he nevertheless still holds fast to what he saw as the scriptural prohibition against judging the spiritual experience of others.⁵¹ Accordingly, while he regards the saints as necessarily charitable and humble, he still refers to these virtues as ‘hidden manna’ (Rev. 2:17). In his ecclesiastical writings, as we will see in Chapter 6, Edwards developed another way of trying to balance a humble fallibility with regard to moral judgments about other people. But for now, he holds ‘the heart in which [the saints] ... possess their divine distinguishing ornaments is the hidden man, and in the sight of God only, IPet. 3: 4.’⁵²

In the *Religious Affections* (1746), which I rate as his first mature work, Edwards is less concerned to qualify the ethical corollaries to his view that the Holy Spirit does not communicate a simple (or even a complex) fact, but rather, ‘the Spirit of God’ itself, ‘dwelling as a vital principle in their souls.’⁵³ The Spirit of God, he continues, ‘... there produces those effects wherein he exerts and communicates himself in his own proper nature.’⁵⁴ If the Holy Spirit communicated to the soul a ‘supernatural

⁴⁹ *WJE* 4, 316–325, 453–454, 464–465. C.C. Goen’s discussion of this position is instructive (‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 4, 67).

⁵⁰ *WJE* 4, 434.

⁵¹ *WJE* 4, 284.

⁵² *WJE* 4, 285.

⁵³ *WJE* 2, 201.

⁵⁴ *WJE* 2, 201.

fact' without the assistance of which it would be impossible for human beings to know, it would be possible for the influence to dissipate as soon as the indwelling was over.⁵⁵ It would then be possible, as '[s]ome foolishly make it an argument in favor of their discoveries and affections, that when they are gone, they are left wholly without any life or sense, or anything beyond what they had before.'⁵⁶ An 'immediate suggestion or revelation of facts by the Spirit' would be like wind blowing over the surface of a body of water; it may produce temporary ripples while it is blowing, but it does not change the nature of the water.⁵⁷ 'Thus ... the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters, and there was nothing disagreeable to his nature in that action; but yet he did not at all communicate himself in that action, there was nothing of the proper nature of the Holy Spirit in that motion of the waters. And so he may act upon the minds of men many ways, and not communicate himself any more than when he acts on inanimate things.'⁵⁸ When Edwards casts aspersions on this view, he is not denying that God *could* or *does* communicate to human beings in this fashion, just that the charity indicative of *conversion* or *saving grace* is not communicated this way.

If this first objection treats the content of *what* the Holy Spirit communicates, Edwards's second objection concerns the matter of *how* it is communicated. It is not a fact, we have already said, which the indwelling of the Holy Spirit communicates. If this were the case, once the Holy Spirit vacated the soul, it would be possible to forget. Rather, the Spirit's indwelling communicates the divine nature itself: the affective response of love.⁵⁹ If one has it at all, Edwards will now say, one has it persistently. Transience is precluded by the way that the Holy Spirit operates, communicating God's nature. The antinomian cannot, Edwards argues, view love as something that can be analytically defined as the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁰ 'The Scriptures represent the

⁵⁵ Another possibility would be that once the Holy Spirit communicated the so-called 'supernatural fact,' it could, like any other fact, be remembered without further assistance.

⁵⁶ *WJE* 2, 342.

⁵⁷ *WJE* 2, 237.

⁵⁸ *WJE* 2, 202.

⁵⁹ Edwards clarifies that it is not any nondescript love that is meant by charity, rather '...tis perfect love, or strong love only, which so witnesses or evidences that we are children, as to cast out fear, and wholly deliver from the spirit of bondage' (*WJE* 2, 238).

⁶⁰ *WJE* 2, 107.

Holy Spirit, not only as moving, and occasionally influencing the saints, but as dwelling in them as his temple, his proper abode, and everlasting dwelling place (I Cor. 3:16; II Cor. 6:16; John 14:16–17)⁶¹ The distinguishing features of truly gracious affections considered in Chapter 1 dovetail with this general view of the communication of God's nature. If the communications of the Holy Spirit were immediate and transitory, then it would be possible to be sanctified at one point and then fall out of this state when or if the Spirit departed. The habitual nature of the love communicated from God as a 'principle or spring of new nature and life' precludes this.⁶² The communication of God's nature is inseparable from a stronger bent of the heart toward God. Those lacking truly religious affections are liable to 'go off suddenly,' Edwards writes, '... so that from the very height of their emotion, and seeming rapture, they pass at once to be quite dead, and void of all sense and activity.'⁶³ Truly gracious affections are attended with a more or less permanent change of character.⁶⁴

Cambridge Platonists on Virtue and the Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

It is necessary to delve into a deeper layer of philosophical detail to appreciate how the logic of this mid-career shift in Edwards's position more broadly informs his mature ethical position. Only put forward briefly in the Introduction and Chapter 1, it is time to make a more substantive acquaintance with the Cambridge Platonists.⁶⁵ The

⁶¹ *WJE* 2, 200.

⁶² *WJE* 2, 200.

⁶³ *WJE* 2, 344; see also *WJE* 2, 118–119.

⁶⁴ *WJE* 2, 341.

⁶⁵ It is prudent to be cautious about inferring too much from either the term 'Platonic' or 'Neoplatonic' about the Florentine school, Cambridge Platonism, or Edwards. These terms are used interchangeably in the primary materials and classical sources are not, by standards of modern historical scholarship, sufficiently distinguished from later medieval and Renaissance glosses (Ernst Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, trans. James P. Pettegrove [Austin, Tx.: University of Texas Press, 1953], 8; John Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy in England in the 17th Century* (Edinburgh: W. Blackwood, 1872; Hildesheim [Germany]: Georg Olms, 1966), Vol. II, *The Cambridge Platonists*, 357, 403, 478–482; Frederick J. Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists: A Study* (London and Toronto: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1926; Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1970), 23, 193; J.B. Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, 195; James Feibleman, *Religious Platonism: The Influence of Religion on Plato and the Influence of Plato on Religion* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1959), 15. In the analysis and commentary that follows, I

'Florentine school' of Platonic and Neoplatonic studies is one feature of the Christian virtue tradition that had a pronounced influence on British moral thought in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Marsilio Ficino, the main exponents of this school, translated the entirety of the Platonic corpus and a wide range of ancient Neoplatonic texts.⁶⁶ As Paul Oskar Kristeller notes, it was Ficino's fundamental aim to instigate a renewal of a Platonic philosophy that both 'guarantees the accord between philosophy and religion,' something that the reliance of medieval theology on Aristotle kept in question, and has a means of 'bringing men back to the Christian faith' by showing 'the way to religion and to eternal salvation ... through Platonic reason (*ratio platonica*).'⁶⁷ Ficino did then regard the Platonic tradition, as Michael J.B. Allen points out, 'as a philosophical propaedeutic to the study of Christian theology,' his principal creative work being entitled the *Theologia Platonica*; but '[h]is enthusiasm,' nevertheless, '... did not blind him to the various differences with Christianity, even to their irreconcilability on certain fundamental issues.'⁶⁸

Ficino's work had a wide circulation in England in two different venues. 'His commentary on Plato's *Symposium*,' as Ernst Cassirer notes, 'was a source-book of English poetics throughout the whole of the sixteenth century.'⁶⁹ Ficino and the Florentine School were also widely read in the sixteenth century in connection with the humanism of Thomas More and his famous guest while in England, Erasmus.⁷⁰ The

share Schneewind's sentiment that '[t]he extent of genuine Platonism in the group matters far less than its attempt to put Christianity in a new light' (*Invention of Autonomy*, 195).

⁶⁶ Charles Trinkhaus, *In Our Image and Likeness: Humanity and Divinity in Italian Humanist Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970; Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995), Vol. 2, 461.

⁶⁷ Paul Oskar Kristeller, *The Philosophy of Marsilio Ficino*, trans. Virginia Conant (Glouster, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1964), 27–28. Although it did not extirpate the centrality of Aristotle in the theology curriculum, the list of errors promulgated by the Bishop of Paris in 1277 against the 'Averoist' movement in medieval thought, did diminish the use of Aristotle's metaphysics and ethics to emphasize the claims of nature over grace.

⁶⁸ Michael J.B. Allen, 'Marsilio Ficino on Plato, the Neoplatonists and the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity,' in *Plato's Third Eye: Studies in Marsilio Ficino's Metaphysics and Its Sources* (Aldershot [U.K.] and Brookfield, Vt.: Variorum, 1995), 45.

⁶⁹ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 111. Ficino's Platonism had a profound effect on Edmund Spencer (*ibid.*, 112–116), whose *Fairie Queen* the Cambridge Platonist Henry More read when a young man (Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists*, 150). For a general survey on the influence of Platonism in English Literature see *Platonism and the English Imagination*, ed. Anna Baldwin and Sarah Hutton (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

⁷⁰ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 16–24, 105–111.

English connection to Renaissance Neoplatonism is both broad and deep.⁷¹ The most important connection with respect to the Cambridge Platonists, however, is probably John Colet (1466–1519), who spent some of 1493–1496 in Rome before returning to teach the Pauline epistles at Oxford.⁷² Under the influence of the Florentine school, he adopted a humanistic approach counter to the scholastic model of biblical interpretation that appreciated the epistles more for their existential and ethical import than their doctrinal content.⁷³ Citing extensively from Ficino's *Theologia Platonica*,⁷⁴ Colet argues that the only point of Christ's mission was to 'enkindle[] in man the love of God as the source of all being and of all goodness.'⁷⁵ This love, if met effectively with human freedom, did not require any further decree of God, being 'in itself their call, justification and election.'⁷⁶

The Cambridge Platonists further developed this line of thought.⁷⁷ They shared the Florentine school's correlation of classical philosophical sources to the end of emphasizing the 'divine' nature of the reason all human beings possess, e.g., as an avenue toward understanding and participatory union with God.⁷⁸ They were very influenced by scholastic thought in their critique of the 'modernism' British empiricists espoused. The latter was often, though not always,⁷⁹ accompanied with a 'voluntarist' stance toward God's relationship to moral-

⁷¹ Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 240; Clyde A. Holbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973), 162–163.

⁷² Leland Miles, *John Colet and the Platonic Tradition* (Lasalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1961), 18–21.

⁷³ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 12–13. See, however, the subsequent interpretation of Sears Jayne that Colet lost interest in Platonism altogether during the last twenty years of his life (*John Colet and Marsilio Ficino* [Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963], 39).

⁷⁴ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 15; Jayne, *John Colet and the Platonic Tradition*, 12, 28–29, 49, 61, 67–68.

⁷⁵ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 16.

⁷⁶ Cassirer, 106; the citation is from a translation of a portion of one of Colet's lectures on Romans by Frederic Seebohm, *The Oxford Reformers: John Colet, Erasmus, and Thomas More* (London: Longmans, Green, 1869), 37n.

⁷⁷ Cudworth, for instance, cites the work of Pico Della Mirandola (Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy*, Vol. II, 201).

⁷⁸ Cassirer argues that Leibniz was the first European to look at Plato from a perspective other than that of metaphysics and theology of the Florentine Platonists (*The Platonic Renaissance*, 154).

⁷⁹ Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, 9.

ity.⁸⁰ As part of this orientation, they read both Aristotle and Plato on metaphysics and ethics through the lens of ancient Neoplatonism, early church fathers (e.g., Origen, Clement and Pseudo-Dionysius) and their medieval commentators.⁸¹ Despite the fact that many of the Cambridge Platonists were trained in Emmanuel College and ascended to their positions during the Puritan purges,⁸² scholars of this movement tend to draw sharp lines of demarcation between these Platonists and their Puritan counterparts at the university.⁸³ They did differ dramatically on certain issues. But given their maintenance of scholastic ideas and means of argumentation, it is not surprising that the Cambridge Platonists should share with at least Puritanism's 'Intellectual Fathers' a conception of God dealing with human beings as rational creatures on secondary causality.⁸⁴

Among the most distinctively Neoplatonic ideas the Cambridge Platonists passed on to later seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ethicists is the concept of emanation.⁸⁵ As this term applies to the thinkers we

⁸⁰ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 71. Against the empiricists, Cudworth viewed nature as 'plastic' (rather than as mechanical), affirming 'one original vital force governing nature' (*ibid.*, 51, 140–141). On Jean Le Clerc's use of Cudworth in his debate with Bayle on this subject, i.e., 'the vitalist debate,' see Rosalie L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment: A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 117–144.

⁸¹ Whichcote cites Aristotle directly more often than Plato (James Deotis Roberts, Sr., *From Platonism to Puritanism in Seventeenth-Century England* [The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1968], 19–20). He quotes Aristotle almost directly, argues Roberts, when discussing the moral and intellectual virtues (*The Works of the Learned Benjamin Whichcote* [Aberdeen: printed by J. Chalmers, for Alexander Thomson, 1751], Vol. 4, 120–122; cited in Roberts, 98). Henry More quotes from Aristotle's *Eudemian Ethics*, *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Magna Moralia* (Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy*, Vol. II, 357, 403).

⁸² Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 66; Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 7–8.

⁸³ Sebastian Rehnman observes that while John Owen read and appreciated a great many Neoplatonic writers, his only comment on Ficino 'is only a negative reference to the work *De vita coelesti comparanda*' ('John Owen: A Reformed Scholastic at Oxford,' in *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise*, ed. Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001], 198).

⁸⁴ Whichcote, *The Works of the Learned Benjamin Whichcote, DD., Rector of St. Lawrence Jewry, London* (Aberdeen: Printed by J. Chalmers, 175; New York: Garland, 1977), Vol. 1, 298, 220; Whichcote, *Aphorisms*, ed., W.R. Inge [London: E. Mathews & Marrot], no. 1128 cited in Roberts, 88). Again, I am employing Knight's typology of Puritanism here in *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*.

⁸⁵ In the Platonic doctrine of the Form 'the One' represents a perfection to which existing objects are greater or lesser instantiations, whereas in Neoplatonism there is a "procession" of the hypostases [levels of divine being] from the One that is devel-

are concerned with here, it is well summarized, as R.T. Wallis observes, ‘in the Scholastic maxim that “good diffuses itself” (“*bonum diffusivum sui*”).’⁸⁶ ‘[E]ntities that have achieved perfection of their own being,’ Wallis continues, ‘do not keep that perfection to themselves, but spread it abroad by generating an external “image” of their internal activity.’⁸⁷ This quality is often predicated on the creation of the world in the traditional attribution of omnibenevolence to God. John Smith (1616–1652) used the term ‘Divine influx;’⁸⁸ Ralph Cudworth (1617–1685) used the term ‘Efflux.’⁸⁹ But the result of the divine’s not ‘grudg[ing] others a share in its perfection’ is the same: ‘[i]ts superabundant power ... overflows ... [into] the unity-in-plurality of the Intelligible world.’⁹⁰ As Smith observed, ‘[d]ivine love ... arises not out of *Indegency*, as created love does, but out of *Fulness* and Redundancy; it is an overflowing fountain ... and it is well pleasing to him that those Creatures which he hath made should partake of it.’⁹¹ Nor is the concept of emanation limited to the latitudinarian divines at Cambridge. Albeit for different reasons and certainly with less explicit reference to Platonic and Neoplatonic primary texts, Nicolas Malebranche’s *Treatise on Ethics* also substantially reflects an emanationist conception of God with outcomes in ethics resonant with Smith, Whichcote, Cudworth and More. I will be referring to Theophilus Gale in what follows as well. The massive scope of Gale’s work and its highly eclectic invocation of sources from the entire history of philosophy and theology indeed has much in common with Cudworth’s *True Intellectual System of the Universe*. But what makes Gale

oped according to a circular triad’ and in the self-willing thought of the imminent divine rationality returns to it (Maria Luisa Gatti, ‘Plotinus: The Platonic tradition and the foundation of Neoplatonism,’ trans. Lloyd P. Gerson, in *The Cambridge Companion to Plotinus*, Lloyd P. Gerson [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996], 27). Nevertheless, as Gatti points out, ‘the term “emanation” does not apply to the metaphysics of Plotinus’ (*ibid.*, 31) but is a development of later platonism.

⁸⁶ R.T. Wallis, *Neoplatonism* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), 61.

⁸⁷ Wallis, *Neoplatonism*, 61.

⁸⁸ John Smith, *Select Discourses* VI. ‘Of Prophecy’ (London: Printed by F. Flesher, 1660), 209.

⁸⁹ Cudworth, ‘A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons,’ in *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. C.A. Patrides (London: Edward Arnold, 1969; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 121.

⁹⁰ Wallis, 61. ‘Ungrudging’ is Wallis’s translation of the Plotinian term *apthonia* (*Ennead* IV, tract. 8, sec. 6, lines 12–13; *Ennead* V, tract. 4, sec. 1, lines 34–36).

⁹¹ Smith, ‘The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion,’ in *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. C.A. Patrides (London: Edward Arnold, 1969; Reprint, Cambridge [U.K.]: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 169; italics original.

particularly interesting for our purposes is that in his strong reliance on Platonic/Neoplatonic philosophical ideas to make broadly Reformed points he shares more of Edwards's own Puritan theological proclivities than the British latitudinarians. The three emphases of this group of thinkers of greatest help to us in piecing together Edwards's ethics can be fit under the broader heading of the *metaphysics of goodness* outlined in the Introduction.

The first cluster of views in the Cambridge Platonists' *metaphysics of goodness* to concern us is their 'intellectualism' on the relationship between God and the created order. Cudworth, for instance, is highly critical of Hobbes's 'voluntarism' on the grounds that not even God can make what is bad good because it is a quality that stems from God's stature as the source of the good *qua* emanation that inheres in the world.⁹² The 'essential principles [of the moral law] are written within ...,' observes Frederic J. Powicke concerning Whichcote.⁹³ 'No Scripture inspired of God could pretend to repeal them;' Powicke continues, 'or do other than repeat, reaffirm, and reinforce them.'⁹⁴ A consequence of this view is that beauty is a key ethical concept. 'Beauty is the proof of the world's unalterable participation in the idea,' notes Ernst Cassirer, 'and corporeal beauty is after all but the visible evidence that the idea has entered into the appearance, and form into matter, imbuing the latter with its power.'⁹⁵ Given that one can count on God's nature inhering in some form in the created order—a view that will also contribute to Edwards's conception of secondary causes discussed in Chapter 3—we can count on aspects of the world being beautiful (physically and morally). More describes as a '*Moral Noema*,' a deduction from the '*first undeniable Axioms*' of morality arising out of the faculty of *nous*, that '*Good is that which is grateful, pleasant, and congruous to any Being, which hath Life and Perception*'⁹⁶ It is observations like this that will contribute to Edwards's and the moral sense theorists' use of virtue as a kind of approbation, a taking delight in actions and

⁹² Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 283–284, 299–301; Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists*, 119–129; Darwall, *The British Moralists*, 117–119; Schneewind, *The Invention of Autonomy*, 207–209.

⁹³ Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists*, 62.

⁹⁴ Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists*, 62.

⁹⁵ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 101.

⁹⁶ Henry More, *Enchiridion ethicum* (London, 1690; New York: Facsimile Text Society, 1930), 20–21.

character traits of certain sorts.⁹⁷ '[B]eing once transformed into this life of Virtue,' More insists, 'then indeed you behold the Beauties, and taste the Pleasures thereof; then you grow enamoured'⁹⁸ Gale shares More's sense that there is a transitive relation between the idea that virtue responds to and expresses the nature of things and the idea that virtue responds to and expresses beauty. Virtue is 'an habitual disposition of Soul conforme[d] to the Rule of Moralitie, the Divine Law' and at the same time one of the 'distributions and departments of his [God's] rayes, by which althings are made beautifully to shine forth.'⁹⁹ Whatever else he may have differed on, Malebranche, too, strongly shared the Cambridge Platonists' 'intellectualist' position in supposing that 'by means of Reason I have, or I am able to have, some intercourse with God, and with all other intelligent beings, since all minds have the same good, or the same law as I have—*Reason*.'¹⁰⁰

The second cluster of ideas by which both Edwards and the moral sense theorists he critically appropriates were shaped, is the affectional component of religious knowledge. 'According to that memorable Saying of Plotinus,' More writes in the *Enchiridion ethicum*, '[i]f you ever were the thing it Self, you may then be said to have Seen it.'¹⁰¹ There is no way to understand or have knowledge of 'the One,' the Cambridge Platonists argue, without being emotionally and ethically transformed by it. John Smith writes in his discourse 'Of the true Way or Method of attaining to Divine Knowledge' that '[w]hen the *Tree of Knowledge* is not planted by the *Tree of Life*, and sucks not up sap from thence, it may be as well fruitful with *evil* as with *good*, and bring forth *bitter* fruit as well as *sweet*.'¹⁰² James Deotis Roberts, Sr. notes that Whichcote, heavily influenced by the Alexandrian School of Christian Platonism, makes use of Origen's concept of "divine likeness" as a prerequisite for revelation¹⁰³ This experience of God is, preeminently, love. The intellectual love of the rational nature which constitutes the immanent divine for the Platonist

⁹⁷ The reader of More's *Enchiridion* does well to remember the considerable extent he relies on Aristotle's ethics in this work. The good person, according Aristotle, takes pleasure in doing good things and seeing others do good things.

⁹⁸ More, *Enchiridion ethicum*, 9.

⁹⁹ Theophilus Gale, *Court of the Gentiles. Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 14, 18.

¹⁰⁰ Nicolas Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics* (1684), translation with an introduction by Craig Walton (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1993), 45; italics original.

¹⁰¹ More, *Enchiridion ethicum*, 9; italics original.

¹⁰² John Smith, 'The True Way of Attaining to Divine Knowledge,' 130; italics original.

¹⁰³ Roberts, *From Puritanism to Platonism*, 22.

is the central virtue in More's *Enchiridion ethicum*.¹⁰⁴ Cudworth, too, suggests to his House of Commons audience in 1647 that they '*follow truth in love ... and of the two indeed, be contented rather, to misse of the conveying of a Speculative Truth, then to part with Love.*'¹⁰⁵ John Tulloch rightfully regards as the trademark of Cambridge Platonism the insistence on the Holy Spirit's ineluctable presence in true morality.¹⁰⁶ '... [M]oral Acts that flow not from a vital Principe virtuously disposed,' Gale also insists are 'morally dead, albeit they may seem to have shadows of life. Or look as no member of the bodie performs any action of natural life, wherein a pulse derived from the heart beats not'¹⁰⁷ And this lively beating heart is alive with the emanations of the divine nature. All true virtue is a form of the divine love.¹⁰⁸ Malebranche is perhaps least like the Cambridge Platonists on this point. As noted above, reason was his preferred denotation for the divine order. Nevertheless, when he expositis the features of the saving encounter with the divine order, a more affectional vocabulary is applied. There seems to be an analogue for Edwards's distinction between 'cordial agreement' and 'natural agreement' in Malebranche when he observes that '... love of the immutable order of justice must always be joined to love as union which is related to God's power, in order that our love being similar to Divine Love'¹⁰⁹ Charity, the only virtue, is most saliently described as a *love* of God's order.¹¹⁰

The final point of these 'latitudinarian' divines worth noting under the heading of the *metaphysics of goodness* is the strong association of justification with sanctification that follows from their adaptation of the Platonic/Neoplatonic heritage. Already present in John Colet's lectures on the Pauline epistles, Whichcote expands this sentiment to include sanctification when he insists that 'nothing is desperate in the condition of good men: they will not live and die in any dangerous error.'¹¹¹ He makes the point even stronger by adding redemption, salvation, reconciliation, and glorification to the equation of justification and

¹⁰⁴ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 125.

¹⁰⁵ Cudworth, 'A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons,' 118; italics original.

¹⁰⁶ Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 468–469.

¹⁰⁷ Theophilus Gale, *Court of the Gentiles. Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 61.

¹⁰⁸ Theophilus Gale, *Court of the Gentiles. Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 75.

¹⁰⁹ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 159.

¹¹⁰ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 49, 53, 54, 60, 62.

¹¹¹ Whichcote, *Works*, Vol. 2, 20; cited in Powicke, 42.

sanctification.¹¹² Nothing short of divinization, ‘a God-like frame and temper of mind that expresses itself in life and actions conformed to the divine will,’ is the telos and reality of true religion.¹¹³ Cudworth uses the locution ‘partakers of his *Divine Form*.’¹¹⁴ Smith uses ‘*God-like frame of Spirit*.’¹¹⁵ Being chosen from the mass of humanity worthy of damnation by an inscrutable divine decree is only minimally implied and is in any case insufficient to the Cambridge Platonists’ conception of regeneration. Cudworth cites Athanasius in saying ‘*God was therefore incarnated and made man, that he might Deifie us*.’¹¹⁶

Some scholars seem to be uncomfortable fully dividing the Cambridge Platonists from the more standard Calvinist view of sanctification, i.e., as growing in holiness after the gift of justification though not necessarily quickly, without fluctuation, or very far.¹¹⁷ The unapologetic invocation of achieving a god-like virtue does, indeed, break beyond something of a standard Reformed line on justification by faith. Tulloch, for instance, suggests that Cudworth ‘does not object to discriminate betwixt justification and sanctification, or even to speak of an “imputative righteousness.”’¹¹⁸ But these seem residual assumptions about ‘Reformed orthodoxy’ finally at odds with the overall work and aims of these figures. Cudworth casts no small degree of derision on the Westminster program in his House of Commons sermon when he finds a ‘proneness to misconstruction’ in the supposition that ‘the

¹¹² Whichcote, *Works*, Vol. 2, 80–82; cited by Powicke, 74.

¹¹³ Whichcote, *Works*, Vol. 4, 300; cited in Roberts, *From Puritanism to Platonism*, 114.

¹¹⁴ Cudworth, ‘A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons,’ 101, 116–117; italics original.

¹¹⁵ Smith, *Select Discourses* VIII. ‘Of the Shortness and Vanity of a Pharasaick Righteousness,’ 372.

¹¹⁶ Cudworth, ‘A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons,’ 101; italics original.

¹¹⁷ Roberts concludes his treatment of Whichcote’s conception of ‘saving knowledge’ with a several page treatment of the Calvinist view of intercessory grace (*From Puritanism to Platonism*, 143–146). When Roberts observes that Whichcote’s treatment of Phil. 2: 12, 13 invokes the Greek participle ‘working’ (Whichcote, *Works*, Vol. 1, 287–289; cited in Roberts, 145), for instance, indicating not a single act but a continual action, one possible reading is that ‘Christ is made our righteousness, He is our sanctification and redemption’ in the sense of justification being given in its entirety while the seed of sanctification is given and expected to grow as the regenerate continue to work out their salvation with fear and trembling (Roberts, 145). One would expect however, that if such a view were a part of Whichcote’s general theological orientation that he would develop at least in some basic form a theory of the atonement. If Powicke’s assessment is correct, Whichcote did not (Powicke, *The Cambridge Platonists*, 68).

¹¹⁸ Tulloch, *Rational Theology and Christian Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 238.

Gospel were nothing else but a Declaration to the World, of Gods ingaging his affections from all eternity, on some particular persons, in such a manner, as that he would resolve to love them ... though he never made them partakers of his Image in righteousness and true holinesse¹¹⁹ Such a view, Cudworth continues with considerable vehemence, is 'nothing else, but to make the God that we worship ... *an acceptor of persons*: and one that should encourage that in the world which is diametrically opposite to Gods own Life and Being.'¹²⁰ Cudworth characterizes this misconstrual as something to which humans are 'prone' in their anthropomorphism: 'because we mortals can *fondly* love and hate, and sometimes, hug the very Vices, of those to whom our affections are engaged, ... we are so ready to shape out a Deity like unto our selves, and to fashion out such a *God*, as will in Christ at least, hug the very wickednesse of the world: and in those that be once his own ... connive at their very sinnes'¹²¹ When Cudworth says that 'Christ came not into the world onely, to cast a Mantle over us, and hide all our filthy sores, from Gods avenging eye, with his merits and righteousness; but he came likewise, to be a ... Physitian of souls, to free us from the filth and corruption of them,'¹²² it is possible that he means only to recall the Westminster divines to the Reformed staple that sanctification follows upon justification. But given Powicke's reminder that the delivery of this sermon was at the pinnacle of Puritan ascendancy (upon the confirmation of the Westminster Confession),¹²³ I think we are entitled to read these remarks together with his explicit critique of predestination's denial of free will as a critique of the Calvinist program more globally. A 'meer Imaginary Righteousnesse,' argues Cudworth, is not sufficient for healing original sin; 'an *immortall seed* of Grace' must be 'really convey[ed] ... into the hearts of true Believers ... till it have at last, quite wrought out that *poison* of the *Serpent*.'¹²⁴ '[T]he very Pith and Kernel of it [the great Myserie of the Gospel],' he pleads, 'consists in *Christ inwardly formed* in our hearts.'¹²⁵ Leaving no room to retreat into

¹¹⁹ Cudworth, 'A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons,' 99–100.

¹²⁰ Cudworth, 'A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons,' 100; italics original.

¹²¹ Cudworth, 'A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons' 100.

¹²² Cudworth, 'A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons,' 103.

¹²³ Cudworth, 'A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons,' 43–44.

¹²⁴ Cudworth, 'A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons,' 104; italics original.

¹²⁵ Cudworth, 'A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons,' 109; italics original.

qualification, he finally asserts that '[t]he Gospel, if it be onely without us, cannot save us; no more then that Physitians Bill, could cure the ignorant Patient of his disease, who, when it was commended to him, took the Paper onely, and put it up in his pocket, but never drunk the Potion that was prescribed in it.'¹²⁶ Gale too asks, '[a]re not althings so far beautiful as they partake of his Divine Perfection and Goodnesse? For what is al created Beautie, but a ray of the Divine Beautie?' And he answers that '[a]mong created Beauties, doth any thing more resemble the Divine Beautie than true Virtue?'¹²⁷

It should be clear by now why the Cambridge Platonists might have been criticized as 'indifferent' in religious matters by Puritans.¹²⁸ In emphasizing the immanence of the divine nature, the divine reason all human beings possess, they also emphasized the absolute freedom of all agents to develop and expand their participation in it. Their insistence that not only the incarnation was necessary as a metaphysical backdrop for individual regeneration but also that some personal encounter with Jesus in the Word was required for the moral generation they emphasized fell on deaf ears. Whichcote admitted in the first of his letters to his disappointed Puritan tutor Antony Tuckney that 'Christ is to be acknowledged as a principle of grace *in* us, as well as an advocate *for* us' but shows himself not to hold the high Calvinist view of this advocacy in insisting that '... Christ doth not dividedly perform these offices, one and not the other.'¹²⁹ Citing Mt. 18: 35, he instead argues that 'with God there cannot be reconciliation without our becoming God-like'¹³⁰ Minimally, as Whichcote explains, this means the ability to 'yield, be subdued to the rules of goodness.'¹³¹ The Cambridge Platonists do lose the divine in the moral but, as Tulloch aptly put it, 'by divinising the moral, not humanising the divine.'¹³²

¹²⁶ Cudworth, 'A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons,' 109.

¹²⁷ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 85.

¹²⁸ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 37.

¹²⁹ 'Letter of Benjamin Whichcote to Antony Tuckney,' in *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. Gerald R. Cragg (New York: Oxford University Press, 1968), 38. This correspondence was first published under the title *Eight Letters which Passed between Dr. Whichcote Provost of King's College and Dr. Tuckney Master of Emmanuel College in Cambridge*, ed. Samuel Salter (London, 1753).

¹³⁰ 'Letter of Benjamin Whichcote to Antony Tuckney,' 39.

¹³¹ 'Letter of Benjamin Whichcote to Antony Tuckney,' 39.

¹³² Tulloch, *Natural Theology and Christian Philosophy*, Vol. 2, 469.

Using Cambridge Platonism Against Deism and Moral Sense Theory

What we must appreciate about Edwards's argument in the *Two Dissertations* is that he regarded moral sense theorists as having taken the Cambridge Platonist program of emphasizing the self-fulfilling nature of moral striving into a separation of morality from the divine—at least in the sense of focusing more attention on the demands of morality and leaving the relationship of morality to scriptural theology to theologians. If the moral sense theorists followed the Cambridge Platonists in adopting a conception of the creation as the embodiment of the abstract form of the divine *summum bonum qua* natural truth,¹³³ there is a broader spectrum of views one can take on what might be called the 'connection,' 'involvement,' or 'active presence' of the creator with the creation. One must not underestimate the vocal contingents arguing for (i) the appropriateness of appeals to revelation on certain foundational points of doctrine or where the evidence of the senses and/or reason was insufficient and, alternately, for (ii) the identity of truths discoverable by reason and truths discoverable by revelation.¹³⁴ Indeed, one of the most fascinating things about this period is the manner in which, despite the sometimes radical differences between them, thinkers from one such contingent read and thought carefully about the views of thinkers from other contingents. At the opposite end of this spectrum from Edwards are the Deists, who sought to purge philosophy from appeals to revelation and to see what could be said about important spiritual and ethical matters solely on the basis of natural human capacities.¹³⁵ Peter Byrne rightly cautions against oversimplifying the Deists' view as ruling a personal relationship to God *tout court*; but while 'the moral character of the world we live in is central,'¹³⁶ it remains the case that the mutable interaction of the Yahweh of biblical history allows an objectionable arbitrariness into the creation.¹³⁷ The Cambridge Platonists are somewhere in the middle of this spectrum. For them, the Biblical God remained an integral theoretical link to the structure and

¹³³ Ramsey, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 8, 55.

¹³⁴ John Locke may be seen to be representative of both (i) and (ii) in *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, ed. I.T. Ramsey (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford Univ. Press, 1958); see especially, para. 241, 245–246.

¹³⁵ Peter Byrne, *Natural Religion and the Religion of Nature: The Legacy of Deism* (London: Routledge, 1989), 4.

¹³⁶ Byrne, *Natural Religion and the Religion of Nature*, 60.

¹³⁷ Byrne, *Natural Religion and the Religion of Nature*, 53–60.

symmetry of the world. Cudworth objects to the ‘mechanistic’ conception of nature he attributed to Descartes on just this point, i.e., that God cannot have a dynamic presence in such a world.¹³⁸ Cudworth develops his well-known view in the *True Intellectual System of the Universe* that the world has a ‘plastic nature.’ ‘There is,’ Cudworth’s nineteenth-century commentator John Tulloch writes, ‘... a subordinate and secondary soul in us, which carries out unreflectively the behests of the higher intelligent nature, so is there such a soul in the world constantly executive of the divine plans—a dumb, patient, sleepless energy, every obedient to the divine will, and unceasingly translating it into form and action.’¹³⁹ But once certain foundational premises were established, the Cambridge Platonists would have to admit that most of practical theology could productively move along paths shared with those who held more thoroughly ‘natural’ views of the creation.

The moral sense theorists occupy a space along this spectrum of views concerning the ethical implications of God’s relationship to the creation in between the Cambridge Platonists and the Deists. Shaftesbury read and admired the Cambridge Platonists,¹⁴⁰ and should be seen as their successor at least in the sense that he sought a conception of ethics that resisted the deleterious consequences of sectarian religious zeal in a universal ethic grounded in the fulfillment of ‘natural’ human sensibilities.¹⁴¹ Any Cambridge Platonist would have affirmed the ‘naturalness’ of these traits. As noted above, love was considered to be principal among the perfections attributed to God in which human beings participate *via* divine reason or *nous*, such that Whichcote writes ‘... the Make of Man, the natural Use of Mind and Understanding ... is enough to satisfie any one concerning the Being of God, and his essential Perfections’¹⁴² Shaftesbury nevertheless developed an aesthetics of ethical judgment—virtue *qua* ‘sensibility’ for the good—that encom-

¹³⁸ Tulloch, *Natural Theology and Christian Philosophy*, 2:270.

¹³⁹ Tulloch, *Natural Theology and Christian Philosophy*, 2:271.

¹⁴⁰ In 1698 he brought out the first edition of Whichcote’s sermons. He praises Cudworth’s *True Intellectual System of the Universe* (‘The Moralists,’ Part II, Section 3, in *Characteristics*, 2nd revised edition, vol. II, 262). He recognized positively More’s *Enchiridion ethicum* in a letter to Michael Ainsworth, 30 December 1709. (Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 160.)

¹⁴¹ Darwall, *The British Moralists and the Internal ‘Ought,’* 178.

¹⁴² Whichcote, ‘The Use of Reasons in Matters of Religion,’ in *The Cambridge Platonists*, edited by C.A. Patrides (London: Edward Arnold, 1969; Reprint, Cambridge [U.K.]: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 47.

passes, but is not limited by or coterminous with, the religious life. He probably agreed with John Smith's view that religion potentially '*widens and enlarges all the Faculties of the Soul, and begets a true Ingenuity, Liberty and Amplitude, the most free and Generous Spirit, in the Minds of Good men*' but was less concerned to specify the kind of religion that could best accomplish this than he was with the 'Amplitude' of good men itself.¹⁴³ The 'moral sense' attendant upon this 'free and Generous spirit' generates a 'disinterested pleasure' upon perceiving in oneself and others acts of virtue. Such actions have a beauty as unmistakable to the eye of a virtuous person as the proportions of a fine sculpture or well-proportioned country house have to the artistically sensitive eye of the Georgian aesthete. But finally, beauty is the primary concept in Shaftesbury's ethics and not goodness.¹⁴⁴ 'Disinterested Pleasure' is Shaftesbury's central term.¹⁴⁵ Beauty and morality are not equally invested in the structure of Being emanated from God's own nature. Morality is a species of beauty. This was a move of which Hutcheson, whose divergent articulation of the moral sense it is beyond the scope of this supplementary analysis to treat in any detail, was highly critical.¹⁴⁶

Adapting Emanation Metaphysics for Reformed Polemics

Edwards did read at least portions of both Shaftesbury and Hutcheson's work directly, but while writing *the Two Dissertations*, he was probably responding to the more general amalgamation of their distinctive views of the 'moral sense' distilled by George Turnbull.¹⁴⁷ A brief consideration of his less original *Principles of Moral Philosophy* provides an instructive example of how Edwards will use the ideas on one spectrum of the Platonic/Neoplatonic stream of British religious ethics (Cambridge Platonism) to critique ideas at the other end (Deism and moral sense theory).¹⁴⁸

Edwards shares with Turnbull a sense that the moral mark toward which human beings are exhorted by Scripture to strive is very high—

¹⁴³ Smith, 'The Excellency and Nobleness of True Religion,' 158; italics original.

¹⁴⁴ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 167.

¹⁴⁵ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance*, 186–187.

¹⁴⁶ Darwall, *The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought'*, 209.

¹⁴⁷ Ramsey, 'Appendix II: Edwards on the Moral Sense,' *WJE* 8, 704–705.

¹⁴⁸ Ramsey, 'Appendix II: Edwards on the Moral Sense,' *WJE* 8, 704; George Turnbull, *The Principles of Moral Philosophy* (London: Printed for J. Noon, 1740).

indeed, precisely the kind of deification insisted upon by the Cambridge Platonists. ‘We shall be like him [God],’ Turnbull writes, ‘for we shall see him as he is.’¹⁴⁹ Edwards further shares with Turnbull a sense of righteousness as inherent rather than imputed. He continues with the qualification that ‘... as high as this mark may appear to be, yet it is not too sublime an end to be proposed to beings indued with moral powers, and in this sense created after the image of God, as man is said to be in scripture, and really is.’¹⁵⁰ Edwards will part company not only with the moral sense theorists but even with aspects of the Cambridge Platonists on matters pertaining to how this high mark is to be acquired and maintained. God-like virtue is a reachable mark for Turnbull not because of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling—he does not adopt a conception of inherent righteousness in this sense. Nor is it given as the kind of ‘divine reason’ the Cambridge Platonists envisioned emanating from God but in human nature created in the image of God. Rather, because God has endowed humans with the wherewithal to develop this virtue naturally, Turnbull supposes that ‘[i]t cannot be said to be above our power to make gradual progress towards that high degree of moral perfection we are made capable of conceiving and approving.’¹⁵¹ When he remarks that ‘[n]o man can absolutely lose all sense and discernment of moral good and evil while he retains his understanding’ it is important to recognize this as an amplification of the ‘naturalness’ of virtue.¹⁵² In the Cambridge Platonists, while some degree of virtue is given in nature—hard-wired, as it were—its full efficacy can only be characterized as a participation in God’s nature that human beings have through God’s perpetual emanation.¹⁵³ It stems from, as Cassirer puts it, ‘the Logos which dwells *within the soul*,’ but its origin is still the *Logos*.¹⁵⁴ Turnbull so prominently emphasizes the ‘naturalness’ of this ‘moral sense’ that he holds it can *never* be lost. ‘The heart of man,’ he supposes, ‘cannot be corrupted to such a degree, but it will continue to

¹⁴⁹ Turnbull, *The Principles of Moral Philosophy*, Vol. II., *Christian Philosophy: Or, The Christian Doctrine Concerning God, Providence, Virtue, and A Future State, Proved to be Agreeable to True Philosophy, And to be attended with A Truly Philosophical Evidence* (London: Printed For J. Noon, 1740), 298.

¹⁵⁰ Turnbull, *Principles of Moral Philosophy*, Vol. II, 299; ‘indued’ is an archaic version of ‘imbued.’

¹⁵¹ Turnbull, *Principles of Moral Philosophy*, Vol. II, 301.

¹⁵² Turnbull, *Principles of Moral Philosophy*, Vol. II, 300–301.

¹⁵³ Fiering notes that Edwards shared More’s views in this respect (*Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 266).

¹⁵⁴ Cassirer, *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, 61; emphasis mine.

tell him as often as he looks into it, that sin debases the human nature; and that man was created a reasonable being, that he might, by assiduous care to improve his mind, become pure as God is pure; benevolent as God is benevolent; like God, and fit for a share of that same kind of happiness, which, in its perfect degree, is the felicity of the supreme being, in consequence of his absolute moral perfection.¹⁵⁵

Whereas the rebuttal of New Light 'enthusiasm' put the practical syllogism and the concept of secondary causality at center stage in the *Religious Affections*, it is the movement in ethics Turnbull assimilated that Edwards attacks in his *Two Dissertations*—moral sense theory as a species of what Fiering calls 'that voracious eighteenth-century naturalism that would make of ... divinely given virtue just one more historical variety of natural virtue found commonly in the world, rather than a unique consequence of special grace.'¹⁵⁶ The principal aim in this text, as I see it, was to elaborate the concept of inherent righteousness. It might not be immediately apparent why Edwards's engagement with the moral sense theory presented this opportunity. Indeed, distinguishing regenerate virtues from their natural semblances would seem instead to provide a more obvious opportunity to go the other direction—to argue that there is a relationship in which humans stand to God that is beyond morality. The imputation of Christ's righteousness is not meant to replace morality, after all; it is meant to comfort fallible human beings that moral perfection is not the only recourse before the seat of judgment. But despite the potential for intensifying the anxieties connected with requiring perfection, Edwards opts for the opposite route: further emphasizing the exhaustively other-regarding sympathies regenerate Christians distinctively possess. In general terms, he adapts the 'Neoplatonic' doctrine of emanation (and its attendant concepts) from the Cambridge Platonists to intensify the practical syllogism discussed in Chapter 1. Habitual charity, because a manifestation of God's indwelling nature, is the *sine qua non* sign of regeneration,¹⁵⁷ one

¹⁵⁵ Turnbull, *Principles of Moral Philosophy*, Vol. II, 301.

¹⁵⁶ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 176.

¹⁵⁷ Roland Delattre recognizes the influence of the Cambridge Platonists on Edwards in general terms (*Beauty and Sensibility in the Thought of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), 120. Fiering gives substantive treatment of Henry More's place in New England intellectual culture (*Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 239–247). Fiering notes that New England Puritans preferred the Platonism over other philosophical models for theology because of the prominent place of the affections (*Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 251).

test for which his shared heritage with Shaftesbury and Hutcheson stipulates as finding virtue beautiful. The subsequent dichotomy of types of love of beauty accessible to the unregenerate and types only accessible to the regenerate should be read as a deepening of the practical syllogism.

As noted in the brief history of the British Neoplatonism and/or Platonism above, clerical and non-clerical philosophers alike sought to create a foundation for morality on the basis of the universally observable data of the senses and reason. For Edwards, this purpose cannot be achieved by either of these faculties alone. He admits in the *End in Creation* that ‘... the revelation which God has given to men ... has been in the world as a light shining in a dark place, has been the occasion of great improvement of their faculties ... and though mankind now, through the long continual assistance they have had by this divine light, have come to attainments in the habitual exercise of reason, which are far beyond what otherwise they would have arrived to’¹⁵⁸ He still regards it, however, as ‘... relying too much on reason to determine the affair of God’s last end in the creation of the world, only by our own reason’¹⁵⁹ While an observer applying only her natural faculties of sense and reason may rightly infer God’s delight in symmetry and order from the order and symmetry in the world, she cannot thereby presume that there is no further purpose lying beneath or beyond this. In objecting to the presumption that no other, and no more important, divine intention stand behind such a concern for symmetry or justice, for instance, Edwards observes

... an inconsistency in some writers on morality, in this respect, that they don’t wholly exclude a regard to the *Deity* out of their schemes of morality, but yet mention it so slightly, that they leave me room and reason to suspect they esteem it a less important and a subordinate part of true morality; and insist on benevolence to the *created system* in such a manner as would naturally lead one to suppose they look upon that as by far the most important and essential thing in their scheme.¹⁶⁰

That the world exhibits manifold symmetries and human beings have a natural appreciation of them does not rule out a more ultimate meaning of the world, a more primary end that would stand behind justice as a subordinate end of God’s creating the world. Only the revelation

¹⁵⁸ *WJE* 8, 419.

¹⁵⁹ *WJE* 8, 419.

¹⁶⁰ *WJE* 8, 552–553; italics in the original.

of Scripture (and one's faith in it as a valid guide for metaphysical and moral reflection) can yield the appropriate Christian supposition of a further end and purpose behind the visible and rationally apprehensible order of the world.¹⁶¹ Edwards is not objecting to the view that God's concern for justice may be inferred from the natural symmetries upheld, for example, in common human gratitude. The excellences of the world are not to be separated from the excellences of God in the manner of an original primary cause.¹⁶² But they do represent only a minute subsection of the comprehensive nature of the primary causality the emanative operation of *fullness*.¹⁶³ Indeed, the most important quality is left out by the Arminians' narrowing of God's fullness to God's partial nature as a lawmaker: namely, charity.

I will address Edwards's response to this problem in two steps. In the section immediately following, I will lay out Edwards's adaptation of the Neoplatonic emanation metaphysics. *End in Creation* highlights, in metaphysical terms, the manner in which God *qua* creator stands in a symbiotic relationship with the creation. More specifically, as we have seen, God created the world for the purpose of replicating the divine nature. Edwards does not believe that this purpose, the final end of which is increasing God's glory, can be separated from the nature of the created order without a net loss in perspicuity. When paired together, the supposition that (i) the creation of the world serves to replicate God's generous nature and the supposition that (ii) human beings have a privileged place in that creation as vehicles of its replication together represent the end for which God created the world. In the penultimate section of this chapter, I will show in general terms that it is the concept of inherent righteousness which follows from this

¹⁶¹ The distinction between those qualities of the world and God which are naturally observable and those that may only be intuited through faith and the revelation of Scripture is made all the more complex by the partial confluence of God's ultimate and subordinate ends in creating the world. Mirroring the partial confluence of common morality and true virtue, Edwards presumes that '... we must suppose that God's revealed law, and the law of nature agree; and that his will, as a lawgiver, must agree with his will as a Creator' (*WJE* 8, 473).

¹⁶² Edwards writes that '... [God's] love to himself don't imply it any otherwise but as it implies a love to whatever is worthy and excellent' (*WJE* 8, 460).

¹⁶³ Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility*, 80. It is beyond the scope of this study to pursue the connections between Edwards's analysis of secondary beauty and the rich heritage of Puritan typology; such connections are clearly operative here. For a treatment of Edwards's participation in this heritage, see Wallace E. Anderson, 'Editor's Introduction to "Images of Divine Things" and "Types,"' *WJE* 11, 3–33; and John F. Wilson, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 9, 34–61.

metaphysics that makes true virtue distinctive. *True Virtue* carries the implications of the metaphysical point that God's creation of the universe as an emanation of divine perfection forward into ethics. Again, the Cambridge Platonists do have divine illumination in their conception of 'reason.' Whichcote describes regeneration as a 'Superinducing the Divine Spirit upon the Rational';¹⁶⁴ and Edwards shares much of the description of this moral sense with Turnbull and other 'sentimentalists.' But it will be helpful to remember Richard A. Muller's point about the view of 'natural theology' among seventeenth-century Reformed thinkers that they 'taught the existence of such knowledge and its grounding in revelation' at the same time as they found it necessary to place limits on what could be inferred from it on the basis of the *imago dei*.¹⁶⁵ 'Just as the *imago* remains, albeit vitiated, and in itself is incapable of being the basis for fellowship with God,' Muller clarifies that '... natural theology remains as a *semen religionis* planted in the soul of man, incapable of being the basis of salvation and serving only to leave sinful man without an excuse.'¹⁶⁶ Edwards commensurately uses the Cambridge Platonists' notion of God's emanation of divine love to which everyone has access to isolate the kind of sanctified virtue *only* the regenerate can have.¹⁶⁷

*Edwards's Privileging of Inherent
Righteousness Over Imputed Righteousness*

That Edwards's Neoplatonism has a Christian orientation much more prominent than either that of Shaftesbury or Hutcheson is nowhere more evident than in his development of God's emanative interaction with humanity. This doctrine was in the background of Edwards's explanation of the communication between the Holy Spirit and human beings in the *Religious Affections* and he used some of the same images in the *Two Dissertations*: a fountain casting up water, the sun shining

¹⁶⁴ Whichcote, *Aphorisms* 855; cited by Roberts, *From Puritanism to Platonism*, 144. For a corroborating statement about Edwards's biblical typology, see Robert E. Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 151.

¹⁶⁵ Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520–1725*, Vol. 1, *Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 280.

¹⁶⁶ Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 1, 2nd edition, 282.

¹⁶⁷ Roberts, *From Puritanism to Platonism*, 116–117.

forth beams, a tree sending out leaves and branches, a faceted gemstone reflecting light, etc. In the Neoplatonic metaphysics of being and love,¹⁶⁸ God is seen as embodying *fullness*—the form and source of all goodness, the *fons bonorum*. ‘The One’ writes James Feibleman, ‘pours out its essence with no diminution in itself, until every existence is actualized.’¹⁶⁹ This fullness encompasses both moral and spiritual perfections, i.e., virtues like justice, mercy and charity, along with holiness and joy, as well as what might be called metaphysical perfections, i.e., completeness, infiniteness, self-sufficiency, etc. This concept plays a background, but still appreciable, role in Malebranche’s *Treatise on Ethics* as well. At least his universe is one in which God is the ultimate embodiment of perfections with creatures having been made the recipients of some of them to greater and lesser extents. This puts upon humans the pre-eminent duty to ‘love them according to whatever perfection they possess’¹⁷⁰ Commensurately, we are forbidden to rank and pursue lesser embodiments of God’s perfections as our ends.¹⁷¹ Nor is Malebranche expressing Arminianism in setting out these duties. They are indeed impossible to execute fully without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit he defines, in remarkably Edwardsean terms, as ‘only an effusion, or an impression from the love by which God loves Himself.’¹⁷² For Gale too, ‘[t]rue moral Virtue is a celestial Plant, fed by some invisible root in the celestial World; from which it derives its influences. Members and branches live no life, but the life of their head and root: al divine and moral *Respirations* towards the celestial world, are from sweet *Inspirations* of divine Concourse.’¹⁷³ Gale denied that human nature was capable of raising itself to this state of perfection though realization of its unaided capacities.¹⁷⁴

Perfectly complete and happy, the theological question arises why God created the world at all. This question becomes increasingly persistent the closer one tries to correlate the philosophical heritage of Neoplatonism with Biblical sources. In the *Religious Affections* Edwards takes the model of emanation for granted: both its presumption that

¹⁶⁸ Feibleman, *Religious Platonism*, 149.

¹⁶⁹ Feibleman, *Religious Platonism*, 149.

¹⁷⁰ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 63.

¹⁷¹ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 105.

¹⁷² Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 146.

¹⁷³ Theophilus Gale, *Court of the Gentiles. Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 93; italics original.

¹⁷⁴ Theophilus Gale, *Court of the Gentiles. Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 91, 150.

God communicates to human beings as part of the divine will as well as its explanation of how the Holy Spirit communicates to human beings. ‘Divinization,’ the term with prominent circulation in Cambridge Platonism, Michael J. McClymond is absolutely right to suggest is tacitly part of Edwards’s conceptual vocabulary even though he did not actually use it.¹⁷⁵ In *End in Creation*, he seeks to tie his previous analysis of how this communication works, an explanation he retains with an explanation of why the communication takes this form and not another.

It has been established that the concept of inherent righteousness is generally operative in Edwards’s engagement with the moral sense theorists, whose attenuated conception of divine agency leads by a complex train of reasoning to a view of human excellence limited to natural categories and powers. It has not yet been specified, however, precisely how this concept helps to distinguish his position from the moral sense theorists. After all, Edwards was not inherently threatened by the idea of ‘common’ excellences pertaining to the endowments of human nature irrespective of post-lapsarian saving grace. Several of these were discussed in the previous chapter—e.g., self-love, a certain appreciation for symmetry and regularity (including self-consistency), and a certain degree of pity—and he regarded these natural endowments as not without value in human life. When exercised and developed, they lead to an approbation of what are commonly recognized as virtues in ordinary society (justice, gratitude, familial solicitude, patriotism, pity and symmetrical giving and receiving in social contexts) and a disapprobation of what are commonly recognized as vices in ordinary society (injustice, ingratitude, familial neglect, cruelty, and selfishness). Edwards even suggests that a moderate love and fear of God can be generated by these capacities and sensibilities.¹⁷⁶ As we move our attention from the first dissertation to the second, we move into Edwards’s attempt to show the analogy between the kind of agency God exhibits in bringing the Creation into being *ex nihilo* and the motive-structure revealed to be distinctive in the moral agency of sanctified human agents. Again, the concept of inherent righteousness—the actual disposition toward charity caused

¹⁷⁵ Michael J. McClymond, ‘Salvation as Divinization: Jonathan Edwards, Gregory Palamas and the Theological Uses of Neoplatonism,’ in *Jonathan Edwards Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003), 139–160.

¹⁷⁶ *WJE* 8, 598–599.

by the indwelling of the holy spirit—is the foundation of what makes the regenerate virtues so distinctive.

Given that God's nature carries within it an inherent goodness, there is also an inherent goodness, Edwards argues, in the communication of that nature.¹⁷⁷ Without God's creation of the world, God's glory would not have had the opportunity to be expanded.¹⁷⁸ This doctrine is prominently expressed in *End in Creation*: '[t]he refulgence shines upon and into the creature, and is reflected back to the luminary. The beams of glory come from God, and are something of God, and are refunded back again to their original. So that the whole is *of* God, and *in* God, and *to* God; and God is the beginning, middle and end in this affair.'¹⁷⁹ Again, Edwards sees it as the nature and function of charity to proliferate itself. And the end or function of human life is to embody and express this. But to participate in God's final end in creating the world merely as a passive recipient of fellowship is not sufficient. One must, for Edwards, forward God's end by further emanating charity to others. These others are potential further replicators of God's emanative nature. In creating human beings, God sought to bring even more of the divine moral perfections into being. God's originally emanated love is not only returned to God, that is to say re-emanated, but is further emanated outward to other persons.¹⁸⁰ When God communicates charity, it is communicated as a habit, a 'sufficiency' the possession of which can further replicate God's own nature by further emanating and inciting re-emanation.¹⁸¹ If, indeed, the end for which God cre-

¹⁷⁷ *WJE* 8, 432.

¹⁷⁸ *WJE* 8, 428–429. It is important to note, however, that this re-emanation does not represent the creation of a new substance. The goodness of the world and the goodness of some of the people in the world are an expression of God's preexisting goodness. Rather, re-emanation increases the *quantity* of goodness (*WJE* 8, 432–433).

¹⁷⁹ *WJE* 8, 531; italics in the original. To the metaphor of the sun's light (*WJE* 8, 442), so common in Neoplatonist tracts (Feibleman, *Religious Platonism*, 149), Edwards adds agricultural imagery to express God's refulgent nature: 'that nature in a tree, by which it puts forth buds, shoots out branches, and brings forth leaves and fruit, is a disposition that terminates in its own complete self. And so the disposition in the sun to shine, or abundantly to diffuse its fullness, warmth and brightness, is only a tendency to its own most glorious and complete state. So God looks on the communication of himself, and the emanation of the infinite glory and good that are in himself to belong to the fullness and completeness of himself, as though he were not in his most complete and glorious state without it' (*WJE* 8, 439). This theme was part of Edwards's rhetoric from early in his career (Ramsey, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 8, 67).

¹⁸⁰ *WJE* 8, 479.

¹⁸¹ *WJE* 8, 429–430; Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility*, 141–142.

ated the world is the increase in glory that comes with the investiture of the divine perfections in the world (and particularly the communication of charity to beings who would further re-emanate and replicate it), human beings must be said to be fulfilling their end or function *qua* creature of God, ‘good machines, instruments and utensils,’ when they express and embody God’s love.¹⁸² In bringing the regenerate person into friendship, God thus augments the divine enjoyment by being in the position to enjoy the human friend’s expression of charity not only toward the divine self but towards other (potential and actual) human friends as well. The habitual nature of charity (in contrast to antinomian conceptions of God’s communication with human beings) calls attention to the manner in which God’s emanated nature perdures in the creation. Like the effects of the sun itself, the effects of God’s presence may be stored and, once stored, directed to purposes channelled by the storing agent.

Fellowship with God thus means more for Edwards than a programmatic augmentation of the natural powers of human beings diminished by original sin. The sharing of God’s own power and agency cannot come without *transformation* of the human. As Malebranche writes, ‘love transforms, so to speak, the person who loves according to the object he loves, according to the One who makes all our felicity.’¹⁸³ When Edwards speaks about the cordial consent to Being in general that only the appreciator of primary beauty can have he is thus speaking of what the provisionally equal friendship between God and human beings facilitates in the way of moral regeneration.¹⁸⁴ Those who lack this intimate fellowship with God—this sharing of his nature, concerns, and dispositions—cannot cordially consent to being, but only connect with that subsection of the Creation they can find beautiful through the wholly natural modalities of self-love, conscience, and symmetry. Edwards is again in conformity with Malebranche here, for whom, ‘we are capable of loving any good only by way of the continuous impression of His love, which He bears toward Himself.’¹⁸⁵ Primary and secondary beauty do represent two levels of Being. What some scholars do not recognize, however, is that the dividing line between the two is not only justification, but what justification accomplishes: namely, the

¹⁸² *WJE* 8, 472.

¹⁸³ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 105.

¹⁸⁴ *WJE* 8, 564.

¹⁸⁵ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 157.

ability to love God, neighbor and/or virtue for their own sake (and this, habitually).¹⁸⁶ Further treatment of Edwards in light of the Christian virtue tradition is required in order to draw this out.

Of all of God's perfections there is a sense in which charity (in its overflowing generosity) is particularly manifest in Edwards's understanding of the creation of the world. We need now to stipulate further that loving virtue for its own sake is tantamount to being able to break into charity beyond the ordinary confines of self-love that govern human affairs.¹⁸⁷ 'At one with God, intuitively desiring what God desires,' Irving Singer writes of the mystic, 'the human personality conforms itself to perfect virtue. Joyfully, ecstatically, it changes into whatever God's good will requires.'¹⁸⁸ As Gale puts it, 'A Soul thus inspired with the flames of divine Love has a little Heaven in it.'¹⁸⁹ Charity is inherently generous. It seeks as part of its natural operation to break beyond its own confines, to spread the joy it embodies among those who have it less or not at all. Just as it is not possible to imagine a good person possessing all of the character traits indicative of a high degree of virtue while at the same time possessing a (negative) desire not to share that goodness with others—or at least lack a (positive) desire to do so—it is not possible to imagine God lacking a desire to communicate the enjoyment of the divine perfections. 'God's joy is dependent on nothing besides his own act, which he exerts with an absolute and independent power. And yet, in some sense it can be truly said that God has the more delight and pleasure for the holiness and happiness of his creatures,' Edwards asserts, 'because God would be less happy, if he was less good, or if he had not that perfection of nature which consists in a propensity of nature to diffuse of his own fullness.'¹⁹⁰ The confluence of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic ethical ideas noted in the Introduction should make us unsurprised to find certain arguments from the *Nicomachean Ethics* being employed by Edwards to describe God's relationship to the creation. Friends enjoy the goodness in each other as an

¹⁸⁶ This and only this is what Edwards means by 'a new divine nature' implanted in the person by the Holy Spirit. The sharing of God's ability to love for its own sake is the foundation of the analogy between divine and human agency that makes the most general theme of the *Two Dissertations*.

¹⁸⁷ *WJE* 8, 461–462.

¹⁸⁸ Irving Singer, *The Nature of Love*, 2nd edition, Vol. 1, *From Plato to Luther* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 186.

¹⁸⁹ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 30.

¹⁹⁰ *WJE* 8, 447.

augmentation of their own joy in goodness.¹⁹¹ If, moreover, friendship is an activity rather than a something static one might possess (like a piece of property), then God not only takes pleasure in the communication of charity as a possession but in its exercise and application. ‘His moral purpose or choice,’ Aristotle notes, of a supremely happy person, ‘is to observe actions which are good and which are his own, and such are the actions of a good man who is his friend.’¹⁹² ‘For a morally good man,’ he continues, ‘... finds joy in actions that conform to virtue and is displeased by actions which display vice, just as an expert in music feels pleasure when he hears beautiful tunes, and pain when he hears bad tunes.’¹⁹³ The creation of the world is not conceived or undertaken because of any incompleteness in God—again, by definition, God is the summation of all perfection to which nothing essential can be added—but rather, precisely because of some of these perfections.

The logic of emanative virtue we have been developing—love of virtue is God’s own self-enjoyment of the divine nature communicated to the regenerate agent—is not exhausted by, but it is closely connected to, the legacy of the ‘intellectualist’ component of Cambridge Platonism.¹⁹⁴ What God intended in the creation of the world was the further extension of the divine being: particularly, ‘increasing knowledge of God, love to him, and joy in him.’¹⁹⁵ There is no possession or infusion or indwelling of the divine nature without a delight in God because ‘... God is the object of that love: and the happiness communicated, is joy in God; and so he is the object of the joy communicated.’¹⁹⁶ When one appreciates this legacy in Edwards’s view that what God communicates is the functioning of the divine nature itself one cannot share Sang Hyun Lee’s puzzlement over Edwards’s seeming reversal on the prioritization of the love of benevolence and the love of complacency between the writing of the ‘Treatise on Grace’ and the writing of the ‘Nature of True Virtue’ section of the ‘Controversies’ notebook and the *Two Dissertations*.¹⁹⁷ It is certainly true that Edwards cannot grant a truly benevolent love of another person by an agent without that agent’s

¹⁹¹ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1157b31–38.

¹⁹² Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, trans., Martin Ostwald (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1966), 264–265.

¹⁹³ Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Ostwald, trans., 265.

¹⁹⁴ *WJE* 8, 455.

¹⁹⁵ *WJE* 8, 443.

¹⁹⁶ *WJE* 8, 531.

¹⁹⁷ Lee, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 21, 90–91.

hierarchy of goods having been transformed by saving grace to include God as the apogée. And it is no less true that for Edwards a complacent love of God necessarily results in some benevolent love to God's creation and creatures. Accordingly, it is sensible to regard, as both Lee and Ramsey do,¹⁹⁸ one type of love encompassing the other. Still, the difference in emphasis implied by the alternative hierarchies should not be rubbed too smooth for the purposes of preserving Edwards's longer-term consistency.¹⁹⁹ A prioritizing of the love of complacency over the love of benevolence would leave an opening, however it was qualified by the mutual dependence noted above, for lessening the benevolent expression of love metaphysically necessary for the recipients of the gracious capacity to love God as one's ultimate good.²⁰⁰ Certainly the latter scenario is more commensurate with a conception of the Christian virtue that is more foundationally imputed. But given the developmental shift towards inherent righteousness in the inherent-imputed complex I have ventured to make plausible, and given that such lessening is already implied in limitations of the finite human frame for embodying divine fullness as well as in the perpetual struggling of even regenerate agents against original sin, I believe we should take this reordering of the two types of love in Edwards's mature position as a desire to secure a stronger connection between justification and a robust conception of sanctification.

The communication of God's nature to the human person (*via* the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) allows the person to enter into fellowship *qua* friendship of virtue with God.²⁰¹ This love is generous; but what is the precise nature of this generosity? The concept of charity as a practical principle governing the ordinary Christian's day-to-day affairs

¹⁹⁸ Lee, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 21, 95; Ramsey, *WJE* 8, 551n5.

¹⁹⁹ At least one of the outcomes of Lee's discussion is a defusing of the objection of Alexander V.G. Allen that Edwards was inconsistent on this point (*Jonathan Edwards* [Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Co., 1889], 358–360).

²⁰⁰ For instance, as Philip L. Quinn notes in an extended analysis of the function of this distinction in Chapter One of the second half of the *Two Dissertations*, Edwardsean love of benevolence does not have the difficult generating moral respect for severely incapacitated humans because even if they 'have smaller shares of existence than normal human adults, they do have shares of existence just because they exist' ('The Master Argument of The Nature of True Virtue,' in *Jonathan Edwards Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp [Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003], 90).

²⁰¹ This idea is developed powerfully by Anders Nygren in *Agape and Eros*, trans. Philip S. Watson (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1953), 81 *et passim*. For a relevant discussion of Nygren's view see Singer, *The Nature of Love*, Vol. 1, 277–278, 313–314, 341–342.

is notoriously complicated. As Malebranche observes, ‘there are no principles more sure and more extensive than ... always to keep our eyes on the rights of the eternal society, whenever they are mixed with others—which almost always happens.’²⁰² Fiering notes that central to Malebranche’s ethics was the concept of not only acquiring a love of God and a love of neighbor because of God, but acquiring a love which approaches the manner in which God loves.²⁰³ Malebranche holds that

Truth and Order are real, immutable and necessary relations of magnitude and perfection, and these relations are contained in the substance of the Divine Word. Consequently anyone who sees these relations, sees what God sees. Anyone who governs his love by these relations, follows a law which God invincibly loves. Thus there is a perfect conformity of mind and will between such a man and God. In a word, since he knows and loves what God knows and loves, he resembles God as much as he is capable of doing.²⁰⁴

This is the fundamental manner in which grace operates for Malebranche. God creates the possibility of a certain kind of comprehensive order of divine law, without which human loves would be governed by whatever (more constrained) embodiments of order were compatible with self-love. After admitting that he agrees with the church’s teaching that there is some natural ‘light,’²⁰⁵ e.g., of conscience, which all may consult for some apprehension of the diving order, he goes on to distinguish this ‘feeling’ of connection to God from the ‘delight necessary in order to counterbalance the continuous efforts of our concupiscence.’²⁰⁶ Until we have the experience of God revealing the self-delight in God’s own ordered nature to us, we must swirl around in the confused inner experiences and feelings of limited order by which our own self-love and that of our culture are circumscribed.²⁰⁷ Each of these Malebranchian ideas is central in Edwards and will assist us in adding a level of philosophical precision to the generosity of charity. Such will be necessary, in turn, for our later task of distinguishing the analogues of Edwards’s conception of truly sanctified charity from the ‘natural’ moral sense postulated by Turnbull and others.

²⁰² Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 179.

²⁰³ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought*, 342.

²⁰⁴ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 48; italics in the original.

²⁰⁵ This qualification is one of only a very few matters of theological substance in which Edwards and Malebranche differ (at least in the *Treatise on Ethics*). I discuss this in Chapter 5.

²⁰⁶ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 57.

²⁰⁷ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 80–81.

Loving not only what God loves but in the manner in which God loves it, means that those in whom God dwells are able to love goodness *for its own sake*. The concept of actions being pursued 'for their own sake' was first raised in Chapter 1 when the *Two Dissertations* was discussed in terms of its distinguishing true virtue from its natural semblances. As Edwards is embodying the concept of 'friendship with God' central to Neoplatonism and the tradition of Christian Aristotelianism, it is appropriate to further spell out what God's nature is like when emanated into the human being in terms of Aristotle's tripartite analysis of friendship. The crucial distinction here is that between the motives behind the pursuit of friendships of virtue from the motives behind the pursuit of friendships of pleasure and/or usefulness. Friends of virtue—true or perfect friends in Aristotle's sense—do not pursue friendship primarily because of its usefulness or pleasure, but for the sake of the mutual pursuit of virtue it embodies. Virtue, in Aristotle's account of the good life, is pursued for its own sake.²⁰⁸ The all-encompassing fulfillment virtue yields (*eudaemonia*) alone among the wide array of human ends is not pursued as a means to something else. The Holy Spirit perfects and/or sanctifies the imperfect virtues of the person (heretofore substantially limited by selfishness and so incapable of friendship or love for its own sake). Thus enabled—it is something of God's own moral perfection which is communicated and shared—the person is able to return God's love in a likewise for-its-own-sake manner. 'That Virtue,' argues Gale, 'is the most perfect state of the Soul, and that which brings with it most moral Libertie is most evident; because hereby it is rendred capable of adhering to its *first Cause*, and *last End*, which is the top of moral Libertie. For wherein consists the perfection of moral Libertie, but in its conformitie to its most perfect Exemplar, which is the Divine Bonitie? And is not this the privilege of moral Bonitie or Virtue?'²⁰⁹ The indwelling of the Holy Spirit also enables a person to direct this love toward second parties (and thereby assist those second parties in their own pursuit of perfected charity). The emanation of God's nature—part and parcel of this a love of goodness for its own sake—allows regenerate agents to love bestow this love

²⁰⁸ What this actually means is a contested subject in Aristotle scholarship. See, for example, Richard Kraut's debate with J.L. Ackrill in *Aristotle on the Human Good* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1989), 197–207, 227–251, 309–311.

²⁰⁹ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 77.

on others—to love human beings for their own sake—thus creating the possibility of these second parties ‘re-emanating’ goodness to still further third parties.

A Reformed Moral Sense Theory?

As End in Creation gives way to *True Virtue*, Edwards is seeking to put some limitation on the freestanding efficacy he granted to secondary causes of grace in the *Religious Affections* (more on this in Chapter 3). But even Edwards’s last claim that true generosity—a species of inherent righteousness—enables regenerate agents to love God and neighbor for their own sake does not necessarily effect the desired solution. The Neoplatonic hierarchy of being, after all, affords infinite variations of participation in God’s being.²¹⁰ The best Edwards could claim at this juncture is that the greater an agent’s actions reflect the motive of loving goodness for its own sake, the more inherent righteousness that agent has. And Edwards does affirm that the whole of common morality is, in some sense, a sign or sacrament of true virtue itself.²¹¹ But this sentiment is clearly insufficient to cut the cord of the Arminian moral sense advocated by Turnbull and others. A more substantive distinction between true virtue *qua* inherent righteousness and the ‘common’ virtues generated from human nature without recourse to saving grace must be offered. Otherwise, moderate or minimal ‘acts of kindness,’ actions motivated by self-love and resembling actions of true virtue, could be regarded as lesser manifestations of the real thing rather than as of a fundamentally different nature from sanctified charity.

I believe Edwards does offer such a distinction. While he recognizes these tendencies as participating in the hierarchy of spiritual and moral goods, it is important to note that he does not say that these instances of secondary beauty would be enough to convert a person or incite her to a benevolent love of Being on their own. Only those who already have a disposition to enjoy primary beauty are reminded of it by seeing secondary beauty.²¹² Human beings embody true virtue

²¹⁰ Participation in God’s nature, a substantive view of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and/or infusion were present in Edwards’s thought from early in his career (Ramsey, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 8, 80n4, 93, 726, 734–735, 739, 749).

²¹¹ *WJE* 8, 564.

²¹² *WJE* 8, 565.

only inasmuch as they become partakers of divine nature.²¹³ Only the elect are able to perceive God's ultimate end in creating the world, and then only because they embody it themselves. 'They were respected as brought home to him, united with him, centering most perfectly in him, and as it were swallowed up in him: so that his respect to them finally coincides and becomes one and the same with respect to himself.'²¹⁴ Waxing Platonic, Gale writes that '... we may not fixe our eyes only on these inferior Beauties, but by them, as by so many ascents, mount up to the contemplation of the *first Supreme Beautie*, which is our chiefest good.'²¹⁵ Gale appeals more to Socratic 'daemons' (divine possession that it is difficult or impossible for human hosts to control) against too thoroughgoing a free-will reading of such themes whereas Edwards's undeniable two-tiered metaphysics of reprobate and regenerate prevents him from regarding all agents as determinately able to make this move. But the result is the same: true virtue is 'the gloriose Image of ... [the] first Beautie' not conformable to the pale replicas of more distant images of God among lower orders of goods.²¹⁶ Common morality is a sign of God's nature and purposes of which only the elect may take advantage. Gale asks, 'May any delices be compared with these, in point of sinceritie and realitie? What are al other pleasures in comparison of these, but painted shadows, yea mere lies?'²¹⁷ Even when highly developed, common morality does not fundamentally contribute to the ultimate end of human life, the friendship with God coextensive with the concept of true virtue.

Having specified in general terms the consequences of God's creating the world to proliferate smaller-scale but similarly generous replicators of the overflowing divine nature, we now move into the more substantively ethical portion of the joint argument of the *Two Dissertations*. Charity represents what Edwards calls God's 'primary beauty.' Justice, one of the effects or benefits of God's charity (with regard to the creation of the world and human beings) embodies only God's 'secondary beauty.' The inferiority of the latter is articulated by Edwards in two ways, both stemming from the Neoplatonic heritage he shared

²¹³ See Ramsey's comments on Edwards's conception of partaking of divine nature (*WJE* 8, 461n4, 462n7).

²¹⁴ *WJE* 8, 443.

²¹⁵ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 16.

²¹⁶ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 84.

²¹⁷ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 35.

with the moral sense theorists. We earlier had to postpone a treatment of the former until this chapter. The necessary addendum to our previous account of this crucial distinction is now possible.

First, Edwards identifies secondary beauty or goodness as a subordinate end rather than a primary end in God's creation of the world.²¹⁸ Justice is such a secondary end, only subsequent to God's primary end in the creation. According to the Scripture, communicating good to the creatures is what is in itself pleasing to God:

this is not merely subordinately agreeable, and esteemed valuable on account of its relation to a further end, as it is in executing justice in punishing the sins of men; which God is inclined to as fit and necessary in certain cases, and on the account of good ends attained by it: but what God is inclined to on its own account, and what he delights in simply and ultimately. For though God is sometimes in Scripture spoken of as taking pleasure in punishing men's sins ... yet God is often spoken of as exercising goodness and showing mercy, with delight, in a manner quite different, and opposite to that of his executing wrath. For the latter is spoken of as what God proceeds to with backwardness and reluctance, the misery of the creature being not agreeable to him on its own account.²¹⁹

This is a very telling passage. For though justice is amenable and consistent with charity from God's perspective, God neither enjoys it nor implements it for its own sake but only insofar as it forwards the more ultimate end of God's glory—the primary manifestation of which is the communication of charity. Edwards regards it, in any case, an insufficient motive for creating the world.²²⁰ Similarly, while the reprobate, in their appreciation of secondary beauty, might forward God's glory indirectly—justice is a secondary manifestation of God's fullness and thus indirectly related to charity—they do not pursue it as an ultimate end. Justice, rather than charity, is the ultimate end of their moral agency.

Second, in the Neoplatonic imagery of levels of perfection, those features of secondary beauty and common morality distinguished in *True Virtue* from primary beauty and true virtue—e.g., gratitude, justice, the appreciation of symmetry, pity, etc.—constitute for Edwards lower levels of the order of God's perfections.²²¹

²¹⁸ *WJE* 8, 409–410.

²¹⁹ *WJE* 8, 503.

²²⁰ See *WJE* 8, 102, cited above; see also, *WJE* 8, 414.

²²¹ Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility*, 44; Ramsey, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 8, 22.

... [I]f we make the supposition that ... infinitely wise justice and rectitude were a distinct disinterested person, whose office it was to determine how things shall be most fitly and properly ordered in the whole system ... such a judge in adjusting the proper measures and kinds of regard that every part of existence is to have, would weigh things in an even balance ... so that the *degree of regard* should always be in a proportion *compounded* of the proportion of existence and proportion of excellence, or according to the degree of *greatness* and *goodness* considered *conjunctly*.²²²

He is not explicitly speaking of justice and charity in this thought experiment, but the same point may be made about them as he makes about the relative importance of God and creatures as diverse forms of the good: justice reflects a lower order of good than charity. Edwards is here departing from the Cambridge Platonists' view, which the moral sense theorists generally shared, that justice was in the main stream of divine 'efflux' (God's perfections in which human reason participated).²²³ While instantiations of secondary beauty must still be seen to represent goodness for the creature, those that would terminate their search for goodness in them would remain unfulfilled.²²⁴ Total fulfillment takes place at the more exalted level of God's perfection in charity. Confining or reducing God's saving intentions toward human beings to the observable features of the created order thus represents, in one of Leibniz's favorite rebuttals, the fallacy of inferring too much from the part to the whole.²²⁵ Charity is not present *in esse* in the cre-

²²² WJE 8, 423; italics original.

²²³ It seems to me that here Edwards's makes a philosophical advance in the problem with the Cambridge Platonists identified by J.B. Schneewind. Schneewind argues that '[i]f Cudworth avows that God has two moral attributes [goodness and justice], he has to answer the question of which of them takes priority' (*The Invention of Autonomy*, 210). Edwards picks goodness. For a helpful treatment of Leibniz's compelling attempt to solve this problem see Patrick Riley, *Leibniz' Universal Jurisprudence: Justice as the Charity of the Wise* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996).

²²⁴ Peter Brown captures well how Plotinus's non-Christian account of The One's emanation differs from a Christian account of God's emanation in *Augustine of Hippo: A Biography* [Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1967], 97–98.

²²⁵ In an appendix to the *Theodicy* Leibniz writes that '... the best course is not always that one which tends toward avoiding evil, since it is possible that the evil may be accompanied by a greater good' ('Summary of the Controversy Reduced to Formal Arguments,' in *Theodicy: Essays on the Goodness of God, the Freedom of Man and the Origin of Evil*, ed. Austin Farrer, trans. E.M. Huggard [LaSalle, Ill.: Open Court, 1985], 378). It is invalid to infer, then, that the universe (the whole) could have been created more perfect, simply because it is possible to imagine that any given part of it could have been created more perfect.

ation but stands as God's intention and willed activity toward and beyond it. While God's primary and efficacious causality shapes the world, it is only partially expressed in the secondary causes of grace that inhere within it. While secondary causes of grace—just actions or institutions, for example—embody pale remnants of God's nature, he nevertheless argues that they remain fundamentally distinct from it.²²⁶ Qualifications must be made for what generosity and solicitude God showed in multiplying the types of the divine nature in the providential order, but what Gale insisted with respect to the Platonic contributions to theology Edwards insists upon as a matter of Reformed doctrine: '[t]here is no real moral Good, or natural Virtue but what is supernatural.'²²⁷

We shall see in Chapter 3 that in elaborating his conception of secondary causes of grace Edwards made clear that the habit of charity, once developed, is a power residing in the human person like any other habit.²²⁸ The indwelling of the Holy Spirit, mediated through the secondary causality of their own habits and volition, puts human beings into a relationship with God in which the divine nature transforms the moral agency of the recipient beyond what would otherwise be possible. One must 'have the use of' God's own charity by partaking in it. But while self-love, natural conscience, and natural instincts all represent goods for human beings when developed to their full potential, they remain incapable of either generating or sustaining universal benevolence. We shall have occasion in Chapter 3 to discuss John Norton's poignant critique of 'antinomianism.' 'Take away action from the second cause,' he observed, 'and you take away the vegetative soul, and its operations from living creatures.'²²⁹ 'You take away the sensitive soul,' he continues, 'and its operations from the sensitive creature.'²³⁰ He argues similarly for '[t]he reasonable soul, and its operations from the reasonable creature.'²³¹ Providing the inverse prohibitive injunction (against emphasizing the efficacy of secondary causes of grace to the detriment of God's primary grace), Edwards might have added 'but take away the first cause, and one is irretrievably left with a vegetative

²²⁶ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 140, 351–352; Delattre, *Beauty and Sensibility*, 75, 132; Clyde A. Hollbrook, *The Ethics of Jonathan Edwards: Morality and Aesthetics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1973), 23, 62–63, 69, 179.

²²⁷ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 68; italics original.

²²⁸ Agents have the use of their own habits in some sense.

²²⁹ John Norton, *The Orthodox Evangelist* (New York: AMS Press, 1982), 112.

²³⁰ John Norton, *The Orthodox Evangelist*, 112.

²³¹ John Norton, *The Orthodox Evangelist*, 112.

soul, a sensitive soul, and a reasonable soul without either true knowledge of God or true virtue.' We need now to register, in short, that habitual charity is not self-actualized power for Edwards.²³² The cooperation of God's primary causality is needed to bring the secondary causes of grace inherent in human nature to fruition. The 'secondary' sources of goodness, to which all human agents have access through their natural capacities, are by themselves impotent to produce the fulfillment of true virtue (sanctified charity). They always await the actualizing power of God's primary causality for the depths of their goodness to be accessed and for the limitation of natural moral agency to be overcome.²³³ Again, charity is not in the creation except where God's primary causality has already been 'matched' by the requisite instances of secondary causality. Rather, it stands as God's intention and willed activity toward and beyond the creation. It is only in those actual instances of the infusion of (saving) grace wrought by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit—where God's own nature is communicated in the habit of charity—that an appreciation for God's primary beauty and an ability to act on this as a motive (definitionally, true virtue) is manifested.

To insist, as do Deists, that God no longer has any intentions or activity with regard to the creation, stands at the head of a long chain of reasoning leading to the conclusion that whatever support human beings have in their nature or are able to absorb from the goodness implicit in the creation is sufficient for true virtue and flourishing. For

²³² Joseph P. Wawrykow makes a similar point with regard to Aquinas's conception of habitual grace (*God's Grace & Human Action: 'Merit' in the Theology of Thomas Aquinas* [Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1995], 54).

²³³ God's glory, forwarded in the manner in which God communicates the divine nature to the elect, consists in three things: knowledge, virtue, and happiness (*WJE* 8, 529). The reprobate only enjoy the benefits of the secondary causes of grace inhering within the confines of the natural world. Their knowledge of the world is, accordingly, deficient with regard to what God desired to communicate and expand through its creation. To see God's justice and love of order as central to the divine nature or as the highest form of the good is a fundamental misunderstanding of God. Consequent to their failure to understand God, the reprobate are *a fortiori* deficient in their love of and joy in God. For in addition to a knowledge of God, the emanation of charity that motivated the creation of the world communicates a love of God and a joy in God (*WJE* 8, 443). The knowledge of God, the love of God, and the joy in God each require the cooperation of those secondary causes of grace built into the creation and the primary causality of God's active purpose standing behind the creation. And only God can give the divine nature to another being (and with it the ability to apprehend and embody the divine nature).

Edwards, in contrast, the limited sources of goodness implicit in the existent creation are insufficient for empowering a true love of God, true virtue and true fulfillment. There is no natural means of accessing or achieving charity in the structure of the creation itself. The two types of benevolence that make up the main line of inquiry of *True Virtue*—benevolence toward Being in general and benevolence toward some smaller portion of creation—share something of the same nature (at least for God who is not limited in the way human beings are after the Fall);²³⁴ but they remain fundamentally distinct. There is no infinite regress of less or more ‘natural’ emanations of charity. It is, for the most part, an all or nothing phenomena.²³⁵ Actions pursued with an appreciation of, say, justice, as their ultimate end (and with a more restricted benevolence as their form), may sometimes coincide with truly virtuous acts; but they cannot, in the very nature of the case, indicate a love of virtue for its own sake. The reprobate—not having had the sensibilities accompanying the habit of charity communicated by the Holy Spirit—can neither appreciate nor pursue those reaches of the hierarchy of goods surpassing justice. Only the elect are capable of the kind of agency that appreciates ‘... God as their first cause and fountain ...,’ only the elect act in a manner manifesting how ‘... all things tend to him ...,’ only the elect ‘... in their progress come nearer and nearer to him through all eternity ...,’ and it is only the elect for whom ‘... he who is their first cause is their last end.’²³⁶

The farthest reaching ethical implication of Edwards’s critique of the moral sense theorists’ conception of God is, then, the view that even habitually expressed good actions of a general description, e.g. justice and pity, have no substantive religious content unless motivated by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, i.e., unless the agent is regenerate. He uses precisely the Cambridge Platonists’ notion of God’s emanation of divine love to which everyone has access to distinguish the kind of the sanctified virtue *only* the regenerate can have.²³⁷ This does not mean, Edwards would be quick to qualify, that in each act of charity toward a person, the charitable agent must actually feel love for God in the

²³⁴ *WJE* 8, 455.

²³⁵ This statement will be qualified somewhat in the next two chapters when the concept of perseverance is considered and the Edwards’s most extended case study, David Brainerd, is given detailed analysis.

²³⁶ All quotations from *WJE* 8, 444.

²³⁷ Roberts, *From Puritanism to Platonism*, 116–117.

act.²³⁸ But truly virtuous acts—a class of charitable actions categorically beyond any ‘common virtue,’ even justice—must at some level pursued for their own sake, with the glory of God as their ultimate end and some determinate proportion of benevolence toward Being in general as their form.²³⁹ Whichcote speaks for the rest of the Cambridge Platonists in his thought that ‘since God is the Highest Good, to do a thing because it is good is to do it out of love for God’²⁴⁰ I hope to have established through the above steps Edwards’s distance from the infinite regress of goodness possible under this sentiment. Whichcote’s point in affirming that God ‘... satisfies us in what he doth impose upon us’ is quite divergent from the Puritan Richard Sibbes’s in affirming that even though God “requireth conditions, requireth faith and obedience, yet he himself fulfilleth what he asketh, giveth what he requireth.”²⁴¹ His intent is not to argue that God through ‘created’ grace does everything necessary for salvation given total human impotence; but rather, given that ‘[t]here is a natural and indelible Sence of Deity, and consequently of Religion, in the Mind of Man,’ ‘[t]here is no Impediment’ to this process on account of natural human ability.²⁴² Despite his substantive adaptation of their metaphysics of emanation, Edwards’s version of the practical syllogism is much more ‘suspicious’ and retains the strict two-tier soteriology the Reformed heritage—regenerate and reprobate—at which the Cambridge Platonists bristled.

²³⁸ *WJE* 8, 558.

²³⁹ Just as Aristotle did not regard the pursuit of friendship for the further end of increasing one’s own (and one’s friend’s) virtue as undoing the for-its-own-sake-ness of virtuous friendship, Edwards follows the line generally taken by Christian Aristotelians that neither God’s creating the world to further divine glory nor a human agent’s pursuing a given action for the glory of God undoes the for-its-own-sake-ness of charity. For an excellent treatment of Aquinas’s argument that charity is the form of the virtues see Anthony J. Falanga, C.M., S.T.L. *Charity the Form of the Virtues According to Saint Thomas* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1948); see especially, 37–51.

²⁴⁰ Roberts, *From Puritanism to Platonism*, 113.

²⁴¹ Whichcote, ‘The Use of Reason in Religious Matters,’ 59; Richard Sibbes, *The Faithful Covenanter*, in *The Complete Works of Richard Sibbes*, ed. Alexander B. Grossart (Edinburgh, 1862–1864), Vol. 4, 4, cited in McGiffert, ‘The Problem of the Covenant in Puritan Thought: Peter Bulkeley’s Gospel Covenant,’ *The New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 130 (April 1976): 124.

²⁴² Whichcote, ‘The Use of Reason in Matters of Religion,’ 59.

CHAPTER THREE

THE INTEGRITY OF SECONDARY CAUSES

A Pre-Modern Taxonomy of Causality

Having pursued at some length Edwards's conception of the Holy Spirit's indwelling in the human person it is now natural to ask what status the human substrate into which charity is infused has vis-à-vis God's power. The question is this. Even if, as I hope to have made clear, human beings cannot create for themselves true virtue or charity, is it created in the soul or joined to the soul in such a way that properly human powers 'exercise' it, enhance it, dissipate it, control, or otherwise keep it? A great deal is at stake. For one thing, if Edwards denies the latter—despite whatever differences obtain metaphysically—the kind of formal similarities this book argues Edwards shares with broadly Aristotelian models of virtue would be significantly reduced, and with them, most of what chance there is of fruitful dialogue between Edwards and non-Christian ethics.¹ Even if such a possibility were forgone, however, Edwards's precise relationship to the Reformed theological loci addressed in the previous chapters of this book cannot be resolved without moving through the concept of second causes. Unfortunately, this crucial question is mired in a good deal of controversy. Because part of the convolution has been caused by scholars failing to distinguish adequately between the heritage of philosophical theology that preceded Edwards on this question, his contemporaneous intellectual concerns, and later developments in American Calvinist dogmatics, the untangling process must begin by setting out some historical context. We will then be in a good position to address the

¹ Philip L. Quinn has productively raised this question on at least three occasions: 'The Master Argument of *The Nature of True Virtue*,' in *Jonathan Edwards Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003), 93–96; 'Honoring Jonathan Edwards,' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31.2 (Summer 2003): 299–321; and 'Disputing the Augustinian Legacy: John Locke and Jonathan Edwards on Romans 5:12–19,' in *The Augustinian Tradition*, ed. Gareth B. Matthews, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, Calif.: University of California Press, 1998), 233–250.

other part of the convolution: the fallacy of inferring Edwards's position on this issue from one text or group of texts without reference to the development of his wider theological position.

The concept of a second cause in Christian theology ultimately arose out of Aristotle's four-fold typology of efficient, material, formal, and final causes. For those theologians who did not reject this conception altogether as philosophically amenable to the salvation process, God is efficient cause, the 'prime mover' of both the creation and salvation of human beings. The final cause of human life is generally regarded as some form of union with God, salvation or the glory of God. The justified and/or sanctified soul is the formal cause, that into which the created person is changed through God's efficient causality. And the material cause, the most contested of four theological correlates of Aristotle's model, is the substrate of humanity wherein the transformation from unsaved and/or unsanctified takes place. The latter gives most of its meaning to the subsequently developed term 'second cause,' a type of power that a thing has both within itself and has applied to it from the outside. Aristotle gives the example of a 'curative power' in the *Metaphysics* when he defines *dunamis* (lat. *potestas*, *potentia*).

'Power' means the external source of a movement or change; or, if internal, a distinct otherness in the thing moved ... whereas a curative power may reside in him who is being cured, but it is a distinct capacity, not his function as a patient. In general, the beginning of a change or movement is called a power, which may be in something else or be another capacity of the same thing, and this beginning is also an external or distinct agency; for it is by this agency that a process proceeds and by which, as we say, a thing is 'enabled' to suffer change²

The theological stipulation of material causes is so contested because it is here that the issue of what mode of participation in God's economy of salvation the substrate of humanity has must be determined. Is it active or passive? If there is cooperation of human effort with grace what proportion or order does the co-causality reflect? The common late medieval concept *facere quod in se est* highlights the complexity well. If moral agents do what is 'in them' to do—strive to the best of whatever joint resources of nature and grace are at their disposal—then God will surely reward them with the gracious opportunity to move to yet higher

² Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, trans. Richard Hope (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1960), 104; numbers added by the translator in brackets to refer the reader to an 'Analytical Index of Technical Terms' are elided for the sake of convenience here.

spiritual attainments by means of greater gifts of grace. The divine will always remains the first cause of salvation because the offer of salvation is made through Christ alone, because original sin must be repaired in the fallen will, because the stain of original sin must be removed as a locus of God's anger, and because the just sentence of damnation due to original sin must be commuted. But the concept of a secondary cause provides a mechanism whereby human effort can be a conjoining cause (at an unspecified level of autonomy from grace) to the divine will. For the purposes of clarifying how Edwards adapted his own position on this issue by means of his encounter with both Protestant scholasticism and modern British philosophy (both of which show continuities with earlier medieval discussions), four interrelated dimensions of the pre-modern taxonomy of causality are helpful to rehearse.

The first dimension is the most general but nevertheless productively opens the door to more subtle permutations. The position known as occasionalism, most often connected with Nicolas Malebranche but held centuries earlier by al-Ghazali and Gabriel Biel,³ refers to the blanket denial of secondary causes. As Alfred J. Freddoso defines the term's general usage, '... an occasional cause is not such that the effect is *derived from* it or *made to occur by* it; nor does it *exercise power* or *exert influence* of any sort.'⁴ Granting God this stature makes at least some seeming agents of change in the world 'occasional' causes rather than the 'secondary' causes that exercise some intrinsic power over their own changes. The aspect of this position to which I want to call attention in this first dimension of the taxonomy is the matter of respecting God's will as the efficient cause of not only human salvation but (depending on the version) most events in the creation and the continuance of the world. At this level of abstraction, the concept of causality is debated among theologians in the context of discussion of God's nature and attributes as well as epistemology, particularly what can be known 'scientifically' based on the relationship between the sorts of things there are in the world and categories of the mind. But at least partial extensions of the debate over second causes also arise in the sphere of theological ethics broadly construed. It is the latter that will be most central to our inquiry.

³ Alfred J. Freddoso, 'Medieval Aristotelianism and the Case Against Secondary Causation in Nature,' in *Divine and Human Action: Essays in the Metaphysics of Theism*, ed. Thomas V. Morris (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 74–118.

⁴ Freddoso, 'Medieval Aristotelianism,' 84; italics original.

The second aspect of the pre-modern context of secondary causality I want to flag arises in the treatment of charity in Aquinas's *Summa theologiae*. After having argued for the appropriateness of using Aristotle's model of friendship as a model for understanding the charity with which virtuous humans come to love God and neighbor, Aquinas moves on to ask whether that virtue constitutes something 'creaturely' in the soul.⁵ The alternative option is understanding the operation of the Holy Spirit in a manner that does not require or involve the active powers of human nature (a position he attributes to Lombard). Aquinas's answer that such a view 'rather derogates' from what charity indicates his rejection of 'occasionalism' in favor of some form of secondary causality (at least in this sphere of theological inquiry).⁶ This comports with his general commitment to the importance of the natural virtues for the achievement of the Christian good life despite the fact that even if one exercises to the full extent of what one has 'in one' to do (*facere quod in se est*),⁷ the *first grace* cannot be other than a gift that God '*works in us without us*.'⁸ A certain preparation or quality within the substrate—the 'material cause' of the human moral psychology—is nevertheless required 'since a form can only be in disposed matter.'⁹ The cardinal virtues that freight this theological load (i) encompass in their nature the rectitude of the appetite and (ii) are required if the agent is to achieve and maintain the theological virtues infused *ad extra* to his/her natural moral faculties.¹⁰

The third dimension of causality relevant to Edwards revolves around the concept of freedom. Freddoso importantly reminds us that despite the highly charged polemic, all sides of the debate, pre-modern and modern, defended some notion of freedom.¹¹ It remains fair to say, however, that Luis de Molina's famous treatment of 'middle knowl-

⁵ Aquinas, *Summa theologiae* 2a2ae, 23, 2.

⁶ *Summa theologiae*, 2a2ae, 23, 2, rep., Vol. 34, *Charity*, trans. R.J. Batten, O.P. (Oxford: Black friars; New York: McGraw-Hill; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1975), 11.

⁷ *Summa theologiae*, 1a2ae, Q109, 6. For a persuasive account of the 'anti-Pelagian' possibilities of this term (*facere quod in se est*), see Heiko Oberman, *The Harvest of Medieval Theology: Gabriel Biel and Medieval Nominalism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1986), 131–145.

⁸ *Summa Theologica*, 1a2ae Q63, 4, Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Brothers), 856; see also *Summa theologiae*, 1a2ae Q55, 4.

⁹ St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 1a2ae, Q112, 2, ed. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 1141.

¹⁰ *Summa Theologica*, 1a2ae, Q61, 1.

¹¹ Freddoso, 'Medieval Aristotelianism,' 81–82.

edge' casts the relationship of human freedom to God's power in such a way that bolstered an additional flank of the secondary causes debate around the stipulation of what form of freedom humans have. Technically speaking, middle knowledge refers to the type of knowledge in God that is neither part of the set of necessary metaphysical truths independent of God's free will (e.g., the principle of non-contradiction) or part of the set of contingent truths that God could bring into being merely on the basis of choosing to create the world in which they obtain (e.g., that any one person is in any one place at any given time).¹² The upshot for freedom in the Molinist account is that while God does know under what conditions an agent would undergo a certain action—and can create the world in which that would infallibly happen—God's bringing about that world is not what makes the agent undergo that action. In an example constructed by Thomas P. Flint, '[e]ven if it's true that Cuthbert would freely buy an iguana if placed in C, it's surely possible that C obtain yet Cuthbert *not* freely buy the iguana; if this *weren't* possible, the Molinist will ask, what sense would it make to speak of Cuthbert's action being *free*?'¹³ It is important to note that some notion of divine sovereignty is maintained in the Molinist account. This is because God still retains the power to infallibly bring about divinely desired ends by creating circumstances God omnisciently knows the agent will (freely) respond to in the appropriate way. But without denying freedom, the occasionalist, so as to preserve God's unique status as efficient or first cause, puts significant constraints on it. As Freddoso puts it, 'according to occasionalism free creatures causally contribute at most to their own basic actions, and it may even be that those basic actions include only their own acts of will.'¹⁴ What this third point is helpful to illustrate is the diversity of opinions possible on different aspects of the cluster of different issues broadly included under the heading of secondary causes. For instance, whereas Aquinas was clearly anti-occasionalist on the issue of the *existence* of second causes, his view of their functioning places him across the aisle from fellow anti-occasionalist Molina on the precise nature of the human will as a secondary cause. As we shall see in more detail in the chapter on

¹² Thomas P. Flint, 'Two Accounts of Providence,' in *Divine and Human Action*, ed. Morris, 156–159.

¹³ Flint, 'Two Accounts of Providence,' 157; italics original.

¹⁴ Freddoso, 'Medieval Aristotelianism,' 90.

perseverance, Thomas sees human freedom and God's determination of salvation through intrinsically applied efficacious grace as compatible. In the Molinist account God's effect on the will is extrinsic to it by focusing on the context of choice not the choice itself. 'For the Thomists,' Flint clarifies, '... there are no contingent truths independent of God's will' and supposing such 'robs God of the supreme independence and power that he as First Cause is required to possess.'¹⁵ Richard A. Muller helpfully pinpoints that what made such a view generally criticized by seventeenth-century Reformed theologians was not the concept of contingency itself but the Socinian consequence that 'since future contingents events do not presently have a hard and fast determination of their course and results, there can be no certain and infallible foreknowledge of them.'¹⁶

If one can ask the question of the relative dignity of rational creatures who possess varying levels of causal power over their own states (e.g., freedom), so can one ask about the dignity of the forms God has created. Emanating out from the *dei potentia ordinata* and *dei potentia absoluta* distinction (more on this below), there are differing stances one can take on the importance that the present world be the way it is and not some other way. One way of looking at occasionalism, notes Peter van Inwagen, is that it 'is one of those high-minded philosophical depreciations of God's works that come disguised as compliments to God's person.'¹⁷ In order for a thing's being created the way it is to matter, it would indeed seem that dimensions of its being would need to have an impression or leave a mark on its effects. Recall that to say a cause is occasional is to say that nothing is made to occur by its nature. This is in contrast to the material or instrumental cause in Aristotle's four-fold model. The example of a pen and paper is simply, but nonetheless poignantly developed by Freddoso. 'When this particular pen is moved in the right way by the right sort of principal agent,' he writes, 'it is an instrumental cause that actively contributes to the paper's being written, and to its being written in black (say) rather than blue or red ink, and to its being written in

¹⁵ Flint, 'Two Accounts,' 163, 162.

¹⁶ Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520–1725* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), Vol. 3, 426.

¹⁷ Peter van Inwagen, 'The Place of Chance in a World Sustained by God,' in *Divine and Human Action*, ed. Morris, 216 n4.

ink of one consistency rather than of another.¹⁸ This fourth and final dimension of secondary causality on our radar returns Molina and Thomas to the same side against occasionalism. Without agreeing on the precise nature of human freedom, both grant human beings too prominent a stature as a second cause of the divine will not to have their particular nature operative in some fashion in the regeneration process and concomitantly have some impact on the specific effect of their spiritual lives (whatever the extent the final cause thereof is determined by God).

Without denying that Edwards intermittently engaged in philosophical argumentation resembling occasionalism and even pervasively discussed its terms and concepts, e.g., the arbitrariness of God's will, *what he did* with the tradition of thought on these issues was to defend a conception of secondary causes while insisting on a strong conception of divine sovereignty. We discussed in Chapter 2 his polemical engagement with Deists, moral sense theorists and more Arminian theologians regarding the relationship between God and the created order (issue 4 in the above taxonomy). Edwards there sought to return a conception of God as first cause to the structures of the created order and human virtue as part of that order. Virtue cannot merely be obtained by human effort autonomous from God because it is the divine nature itself. Analogous to Thomas's rejection of Lombard's view of increated grace (issue 2 in the above taxonomy), we saw in Chapter 1 that Edwards rejects the antinomian notion of salvation by means of an indwelling of the Holy Spirit that does not render a habitual sanctified charity within the character of the agent. We will have to await Chapter 4 to see how Edwards's draws on this same background of habits of willing in rebutting a conception of Arminian freedom reminiscent of later Dominican rejections of Molinist 'middle knowledge' (issue 3 in the above taxonomy). In the present chapter we are focusing on the more direct issue of the very existence of secondary causes (issue 1 in the above taxonomy). What we will find is that, consistent with the results of Chapter 1 (Edwards's insistence upon the practical syllogism as the best way of distinguishing sanctified charity from its many semblances), the amalgamation of high Calvinist doctrine he sought with the promotion of evangelical piety and revivalism made distancing himself from antinomian enthu-

¹⁸ Freddoso, 'Medieval Aristotelianism,' 85.

siasm a crucible for his mature position. Edwards's ethics is inseparable from the substantial defense of the integrity of second causes he took up in this anti-antinomian stance. And as his stance draws on both seventeenth-century Protestant scholastic conceptions of secondary causes and the distinctive subset of this discussion within Anglo-American Puritanism, it is helpful to begin by laying out the contours of those traditions.

Secondary Causes in Turretin and Gale

The concept of secondary causality, while still widely employed, could take on quite different meanings and strengths among Protestants scholastics than in the Roman Catholic authors noted above. Francis Turretin does not refrain from invoking second causes, but it comes with a severe qualification: '[n]or, if he [God] uses second causes as means, does it follow that he does not act immediately also.'¹⁹ In describing how the goodness, love, grace, and mercy of God can be distinguished from each other, Turretin characterizes those gifts of grace associated with calling, conversion and sanctification (as in ICor. 15:10 and Eph. 2:7, 8) not only as gratuitously given but further denies that these gifts make one acceptable.²⁰ The latter, he stipulates are 'the effect of the sole grace and righteousness of Christ imputed to us.'²¹ He thus forcefully rejects the co-causality or divine-human cooperation in regeneration. The 'congruous application of grace must either be referred to grace itself alone or to the free will alone or to both. If to the will, either in whole or in part—then Pelagius has conquered, not Paul. If to grace alone, then the idol of free will is demolished and grace will not be equal because a congruous application was wanting to one which the grace of another included.'²² It remains inter-

¹⁹ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing House, 1992), Vol. 1, p. 506 (Sixth Topic, Question 5, section III).

²⁰ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. 1, 243 (Third Topic, Question 20, section VIII).

²¹ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. 1, 243 (Third Topic, Question 20, section VIII).

²² Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. 1, 676 (Tenth Topic, Question 4, section XX).

esting that he nevertheless cites Thomists and Dominicans as supporting the more proper Reformed position in holding that ‘predetermination of God ... [is] necessary in all the acts of his creatures, whether natural or free.’²³ Indeed, Turretin very nearly summarizes the Thomistic or Dominican position of the simultaneity of freedom and predetermination in subsequently reaffirming that the ‘premotion of God ... takes place in accordance with the nature of things and does not take away from second causes the mode of operation proper to each.’²⁴ Also consonant with Thomism in its rejection of Molinism is the limit Turretin places on the range of power in second causes given the (for Turretin) unarguable fact that God’s salvific will cannot be frustrated.²⁵

The nature of the relationship of secondary human causes of virtue and/or salvation to God’s efficacious or primary causality is also given significant attention by Theophilus Gale. Some of the features we have discussed in other chapters of Gale’s use of classical, patristic and scholastic philosophical sources for Reformed theology would seem to indicate that he would wish to grant greater autonomy to human agency as a secondary cause than does Turretin. It will be remembered from the Introduction that to the extent that Gale trims the sails of his love of Aristotelian and Platonic ethics at all, he does so not as much by insisting that virtue cannot be the focus of the Christian life in the same way for Protestants as for pagans and the schoolmen as by insisting that the best of the pagans and the schoolmen understood that true virtue is impossible without God as its ultimate bestower.²⁶ Such a move, taken on its own, leaves a good deal of room in the *ordo salutis* for substantive secondary causes. But when he takes up the topic of secondary causes directly, however, we see that Gale has some substantial qualifications to make of his own. He makes the sweeping assessment that ‘[e]ither the wil of man must be subordinate to and dependent on the wil of God

²³ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. 1, 507 (Sixth Topic, Question 5, section VI).

²⁴ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. 1, 509 (Sixth Topic, Question 5, section XII).

²⁵ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, Vol. 1, 508 (Sixth Topic, Question 5, section IX); Vol. 1, 227 (Third Topic, Question 16, Sections VII–IX).

²⁶ Theophilus Gale, *The Court of the Gentiles. Part IV Of Reformed Philosophie. Wherein Plato’s Moral, and Metaphysic of Prime Philosophie is reduced to an useful Forme and Method* (London: Printed by J. Macocke, for Thomas Cockeril, 1677), 91.

in al its acts; or the wil of God must be subordinate to and dependent on the wil of man.²⁷ He subsequently affirms that '[t]here is no effect which the second cause produceth, but the first cause can produce it alone ... [T]he second cause needs the first in al its operations, but the first cause needs not the second in any.'²⁸ But in other places the qualifications are more subtle. He denies, for instance, 'secondary causes' the full stature of cause, 'whose ministerie the First cause makes use of; yet so as that the principal effieience belongs only to the First cause'²⁹ At the same time, without this inferior class of '*concauses*, or *subservient causes*, employed by God for the production of things' it remains the case that 'the effect is not produced'³⁰

I believe there is some reason to believe that the final outcome of Gale's affirmations and qualifications is a view which has moved, if only slightly, from Turretin's ultimate monergism to various gradations of synergism (where the human will 'cooperates' in some broad sense with God's efficacious grace). It arises out of Gale's point that only those who receive the gift of grace to achieve the levels of habitual virtue have true moral freedom. Rather than let the above qualifications govern the entirety of secondary causality in human agency, Gale returns to the moral liberty of the regenerate to work out 'the spinoie knotty question much ventilated in the Scholes, *Whether the Wil in the reception of Supernatural habits be an instrument or principal cause*.'³¹ And here he invokes a distinction that I regard as crucial to understanding Edwards's ethical position: namely, the distinction between pre-bestowal and post-bestowal human agency. Gale is very clear at this juncture and elsewhere that '[a]s it [the will] receives Grace it is a passive instrument.'³² But Gale admits that 'yet as it actes Grace it [the will] is an active instrument.'³³ This is because, invoking language Edwards himself used regarding the question of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, 'the Wil in the receiving and acting Grace is a *vital* instrument.'³⁴ 'Grace received,' he stipulates, 'elevates the human Soul to a *spiritual Vitalitie* and *Instrument*'

²⁷ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 396.

²⁸ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 400.

²⁹ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 399.

³⁰ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 399; italics original.

³¹ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 400; italics original.

³² Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 400.

³³ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 400.

³⁴ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 400.

talitie for the acting of Grace.³⁵ The agent can neither have nor keep these supernatural habits without the activation and continuation of God's efficacious will. With respect to the past and future, God's creating and upholding activity must accordingly implode any substantive attribution of autonomy. I nevertheless take Gale to hold that while in possession of them the will achieves what is not wrongly called an 'semi-autonomy' of usage if the term is restricted in its scope to the instantaneous present. Even so, the admission comes with some reservation. He confesses 'the notion of an *Instrument*, used by *Aquinas* and others, seems more adequate and genuine to expresse its causalitie by, in as much as al is from God by supernatural infusion.'³⁶ Still, Gale does explicitly affirm that although 'both *Habit* and *Act* are received from God: yet if we consider the Wil as invested and qualified with supernatural habits ... whereby it is informed and capacitated to produce such or such supernatural Acts and Effects, in this regard we may stile it a *principal cause* ...'³⁷ '[T]he Wil may,' he observes in a previous passage, 'as to the acting of Grace, so far as it is clothed with Divine habits, be termed in some respect a *principal Agent*, under God, specially if compared with the effect produced.'³⁸

Secondary Causes in Puritanism: Two Traditions

It is known that Edwards read both Turretin and Gale and at least strongly suspected that he read Malebranche.³⁹ But to appreciate Edwards's intentional vocabulary on the issue of secondary causality one must see the instantiations of these scholastic categories within the local milieu in which he both experienced and expressed them. This is the revivals of eighteenth-century New England and the legacy of seventeenth-century Puritanism that both negotiated it and was negotiated by it. In terms of Edwards's participation in this contested transition, I am traversing some of the same ground covered masterfully by

³⁵ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 401; italics original.

³⁶ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 401; italics original.

³⁷ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 401; italics original.

³⁸ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 401.

³⁹ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 43; George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 525n41.

George Marsden recently but with an eye toward philosophical detail beyond the scope of Marsden's biographical aims.⁴⁰

The extent of the tensions within the Puritan establishment on this nexus of issues has been impressively documented by Janice Knight in *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*. In what follows, I will make prominent use of Knight's identification of two co-present orthodoxies within the standing Puritan order, the 'Intellectual Fathers' and the 'Spiritual Brethren'.⁴¹ Without casting doubt on the possibility of common ground between the divines of New England Puritanism,⁴² Knight is attempting to '... recover varieties of religious experience within Puritanism ... by giving voice to an alternative community within what is usually read as the univocal orthodoxy of New England.'⁴³ Knight wishes to recover in particular the experience of the 'Spiritual Brethren' whose '[m]ore emotional and even mystical ... theology ... stressed divine benevolence over power' and 'substituted a free testament or voluntary bequeathing of grace for the conditional covenant described by the other orthodoxy.'⁴⁴

The moral theology of the 'Intellectual Fathers' exhibits a notable confidence in the goodness of the created order. Obviously familiar with the scholastic distinction between God's absolute and ordinate powers,⁴⁵ William Ames, for instance, saw it as indicative of the divine benevolence to respect the nature of human beings as rational and freely choosing:

⁴⁰ See especially, Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 184–305.

⁴¹ I again invoke the two standing orders within American Puritanism identified by Janice Knight in *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994). In outlining the trajectory of antinomianism and Arminianism in and out of English Calvinism, Dewey Wallace identifies a third party—alternately termed High Calvinism or hyper-Calvinism—which seems to fit somewhere in between the Spiritual Brethren and Intellectual Fathers posited by Knight (*Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525–1695* [Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1982], 49–53, 153–157, 189–190). The precise nature and status of hyper-Calvinism in the history of Puritanism is beyond the scope of this study.

⁴² Francis J. Bremer argues for a 'unity but not uniformity' within the Puritan mainstream on the relationship between nature and grace (*The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards*, rev. ed. [Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1995], 22).

⁴³ Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 2.

⁴⁴ Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 3.

⁴⁵ See William Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, translated from the third Latin edition, 1629, and edited by John Eusden (Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1968), 93 [passage 1.6.18]. Known about by the Puritans (E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought*

1. Special government is God's government of rational creatures in a moral way.
2. The unique character of these creatures makes the difference. Since they are created after the image of God, are in some way immortal, and decide their actions in accord with their own counsel, they are to be directed towards an eternal state of happiness or unhappiness in accordance with their own counsel and freedom.⁴⁶

For the 'Intellectual Fathers,' it would be a violation of the dignity of the human soul if God were to work out the salvation of each regenerate agent as a miracle unmediated by secondary causes of grace.⁴⁷ 'God therefore uses means not because of any lack of power, but because of the abundance of his goodness; he communicates a certain dignity of efficiency to his creatures and in them makes his own efficiency more perceptible.'⁴⁸ As Francis Oakley puts the above distinction, 'the realm of the ordained power ... evokes the stable, concrete arrangements that

from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], 35), the distinction between God's absolute and ordinate powers is a distinction that goes back at least to twelfth-century Christian thought. For an extended discussion of its significance for medieval, Renaissance and Reformation moral theology, see Oberman *The Harvest of Medieval Theology*; Francis Oakley, *Omnipotence, Covenant & Order: An Excursion in the History of Ideas from Abelard to Leibniz* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell Univ. Press, 1984); William J. Courtenay, *Capacity and Volition: A History of the Distinction of Absolute and Ordained Power* (Bergamo: Pierluigi Lubrina Editore, 1990); Hester Goodenough Gelber, *It Could Have Been Otherwise: Contingency and Necessity in Dominican Theology At Oxford, 1300–1350*, Band LXXXI, *Studien Und Texte Zur Geistesgeschichte Des Mittelalters* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 309–349. Willem J. van Asselt notes the extended commentary on the distinction by Johannes Cocceius whose theology of covenant was widely read by Puritans in 'Cocceius Anti-Scholastic?,' in *Reformation and Scholasticism: An Ecumenical Enterprise*, ed. Willem J. van Asselt and Eef Dekker (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001), 227–251. Andreas J. Beck describes Gisbert Voetius's commentary of the distinction in 'Gisbert Voetius (1589–1676): Basic Features of His Doctrine of God,' in *Reformation and Scholasticism*, ed. van Asselt and Decker, eds., 205–226.

⁴⁶ Ames, 1. 10. 1–2; ed. Eusden, 110.

⁴⁷ Technically speaking, miracles can be an expression of the ordained order, i.e., means that God has ordained to make use of in the Creation as a system with integrity. My point that the Intellectual Fathers emphasize God's ordained powers and de-emphasize God's absolute power, therefore, requires a qualification. The way the Intellectual Fathers use this term in a more circumscribed manner than the original scholastic context from which they inherited it. For the Intellectual Fathers God's ordained power, while it may included the 'miracle' of conversion, does not include miracles which worked instead of or against the 'ordinary' means God used to convert sinners, i.e., the church, habits, and the human will *qua* secondary causes of grace.

⁴⁸ Ames, 1. 9. 6.; ed. Eusden, 107. Compare the early Edwards's remarks on this subject in the early sermon 'The Excellency of Christ' (*WJE* 19, 565–567).

the good God, who never acts in a disorderly or arbitrary fashion, has preordained in his creation, has actually chosen to effect, and that we humans can, therefore, safely rely upon.⁴⁹ Ames invokes the covenant of works (on which his theology is primarily based) early in the *Marrow of Theology* in connection with the dignity of human immortality and rationality.⁵⁰ This is not to say that Ames and his circle believed common grace was all-sufficient for the purposes of salvation—they did not—but rather that there is a generous abundance of means and opportunities in creation which, if consistently taken advantage of, must be seen to forward an agent's general spiritual development.⁵¹ Ames gives eloquent testimony to the dignity of nature possible within Puritanism in the following passage:

10. That order in natural things is the law of nature common to all things, or the very nature of things, in so far as these are established in a certain order. It arises from the force and efficacy of the never revoked word of God given in the beginning, *Let it be made, Let it be, Be it so*, which, adumbrating the shape of the future, signifies perpetuity and constancy. By its force it affects all matters which are normally the result of natural things. Jer. 31: 35, 36. *The statues of the moon and of the stars*, and 33: 20, *My covenant of the day and my covenant of the night*.⁵²

It is important to note that the dignity here spoken of is not the dignity of nature *apart from* God but the dignity of nature *created* by God. Within that order there lies both the covenant between human beings and God as well as the *ordo salutis*.⁵³ E. Brooks Holifield connects the covenant with God's merciful 'accommodation' to 'human finitude, sinfulness, and inability' in Puritan Calvinism.⁵⁴ Directly related to their confidence in the *ordo salutis* as part of God's ordained means of dealing with human beings, the Puritan 'Intellectual Fathers' were concerned

⁴⁹ Oakley, *Omnipotence, Covenant & Order*, 50.

⁵⁰ Ames, 1. 10. 9, ed. Eusden, 111.

⁵¹ This aspect of secondary causality in Puritan thought is well captured by Holifield, *Theology in America*, 38.

⁵² *Marrow of Theology*, 1. 9. 10; ed. Eusden, 108 (italics original). On the theme of the dignity of nature see also Stover's discussion of a passage from Samuel Seawall's *Phenomena quondam Apocalyptical ad Spectrum Novi Orbis configuration, Or some few Lines toward a description of the New Heaven as It makes to those who stand upon the New Earth* (Boston, 1697) known as the 'hymn to Plum Island' (William K.B. Stoever, 'A Faire and Easier Way to Heaven': *Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* [Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1978], 3–7).

⁵³ Ames writes, '[f]rom this special way of governing rational creatures there arises a covenant between God and them' (*Marrow of Theology*, 1. 10. 10; ed. Eusden, 111).

⁵⁴ Holifield, *Theology in America*, 34–35.

to apply 'objective' standards to the progression of regeneration. The ordained or ordinary means God used in working regeneration in the soul linked justification and sanctification together more forcefully than in Calvin's prioritization of faith over works. If one was capable of doing good things for the right reasons,⁵⁵ and this capability was dependent upon prior election and at least partial regeneration, then one could infer one's election and partial regeneration. The practical syllogism was, for instance, applied in the refutation of John Cotton during the Antinomian Controversy.⁵⁶ The 'Intellectual Fathers' also emphasized the manner in which human beings' reception of God's grace was mediated through secondary causes, the primary or first cause always being God's inscrutable will in the decrees of election.⁵⁷ Through observations of the quality of the will, which could be scrutinized in visible human actions, it was possible to make inferences about God's saving intentions that would otherwise be all but invisible. John Norton, for example writes in his *Orthodox Evangelist* that '... the operations of the second causes, are from the first Cause efficiently; yet they are from their next causes formally. God causeth the burning of the fire, yet we do not say God burneth, but the fire burneth. God worketh repentance in the Soul, yet it is not a truth to say God repenteth, but man repenteth; God is the next efficient Cause, but not the next formal Cause.'⁵⁸ As would virtually any Puritan divine, Norton would grant that God is the efficient cause in the process of conversion and regeneration. That is, neither can be achieved without grace. But an important difference is there too, that between efficient and sufficient causality. In the latter case there is enough power in the primary cause that there is no further condition placed upon the achievement of the end. For most of the 'Intellectual Fathers',⁵⁹ both the human will and the ordinances of the church represent conditions, which if not satisfied, can block the

⁵⁵ Stoeveer rightly insists that this argument 'concerned not outward acts as such but their inward "sincerity"' (*A Faire and Easier Way to Heaven*, 127–128); but I would add that just as one must not separate acts from their sincerity, one must separate sincerity from the good actions that embody it. Sincerity without actually good actions is as empty as good actions without actual sincerity.

⁵⁶ Stoeveer, *A Faire and Easier Way to Heaven*, 50.

⁵⁷ I am indebted to Stoeveer in what follows both for his excellent treatment of the philosophical issues at stake in the Puritan debate concerning secondary causality as well as his detailed references to the relevant primary sources.

⁵⁸ John Norton, *The Orthodox Evangelist* (London: Printed by J. Moyock for H. Crimps, 1654; New York: AMS, 1981), 110.

⁵⁹ Knight locates Norton among the 'Spiritual Brethren.'

workings of God's grace in conversion and regeneration. Again, Ames makes clear that the inviolability of second causes is not due to any lack in divine power but rather to God's goodness in granting dignity to the rational intelligence of human beings. Conversion was 'a divine ordering of human action, in conformity with the natural character of human faculties.'⁶⁰

On each of the general theological points we have considered, the 'Spiritual Brethren' betray a lesser confidence in the order of the world created by God,⁶¹ emphasizing instead God's absolute power. The natural order of God's creation remains intact—God's ordinate power on what one might call 'dialectal standby'—unless God chooses to violate it or transcend it.⁶² But this, according to the 'Spiritual Brethren,' was done every time God elected to transform the sinner into a righteous 'new creature.'⁶³ The difference might be stated this way: whereas the 'Intellectual Fathers' see the goodness of God in the ordained order—the structures and means already in place in the creation for the salvific benefit of humankind—the 'Spiritual Brethren' see the goodness of God in God's willingness to break through the radical *fallenness* of the created order to redeem human beings. The 'Spiritual Brethren' reject for instance, the efficacy of the practical syllogism as conclusive grounds

⁶⁰ Stoeber, 'A Faire and Easier Way to Heaven,' 103.

⁶¹ For Knight, Richard Sibbes is the main exemplar of this 'orthodoxy.' Even if he did not consistently hold all of the various components of this second Puritan 'orthodoxy,' however, Cotton's uncommon philosophical sophistication make him a more convenient, albeit an uneven, representative of this viewpoint for our purposes. For a more extended discussion of John Cotton's role in the Antinomian Controversy see Philip F. Gura, *A Glimpse of Zion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620–1660* (Middletown, Conn: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), 171–180. Gura, for his part, argues that 'Cotton was no antinomian' (*ibid.*, 174). Compare Charles Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 262–270.

⁶² The expression is Oakley's (*Omnipotence, Covenant & Order*, 50–51).

⁶³ Again, technically speaking, miracles are not necessarily at odds with, or outside of, God's ordained powers. For the laws of nature, which miracles violate, are not co-terminous with God's ordained powers, but only one expression of it. God's absolute power, in contrast, represents everything that God could do but chooses not to do. By suggesting that Knight's 'Spiritual Brethren,' contrary to 'Intellectual Fathers' among Puritans, emphasize the God's absolute power and de-emphasize God's ordained power, I mean to call attention to how they regarded God as regularly employing the primary causality of direct intervention. The comparison with the scholastic distinction between *dei potentia ordinate* and *dei potentia absolute* is not precise, then, but still meaningful. In any case, I regard the debate within Puritanism about the nature of God's causality to be continuous with the medieval scholastic debate, even if the terms have shifted.

for assurance of election. Because each conversion is wrought as a miracle in the heart of the believer, no regularity is to be sought in the means or order whereby it occurs. In place of a reliance on the efficacy of the practical syllogism and the *ordo salutis*, the 'Spiritual Brethren' hold out for a conception of assurance through personal revelation. John Cotton was prominent among them. William K.B. Stoever notes that '[i]n a letter written toward the spring of 1638, Cotton attributed his behavior during the Antinomian Controversy to his concern with the problem of assurance. ... [H]e said ... he had been "forced, not to seek out new ways of peace," but to seek ways clearly more direct and therefore more reliable than that provided in the practical syllogism.'⁶⁴ Indeed, Stoever repeatedly insists that it was the complexity and personal rigor of the 'preparationist' program that fueled antinomianism's promise of an 'easier way to Heaven.'⁶⁵ Whereas Ames granted to the natural order a dignity consistent with its stature as created by God for God's greater glory, each conversion according to the 'Spiritual Brethren' is a free gift of saving faith. Knight observes that for the 'Spiritual Brethren' '[t]here is no incremental process of becoming; no growth in increased graces. ... In good Pauline fashion, Cotton's God remakes human nature entire. Grace does not fill up uneven nature Rather this is a new creation'⁶⁶ The more Puritans emphasized the discontinuities of the new creation of the saved person with the created means of grace, however, the closer they came to antinomianism. Indeed, it can sometimes be difficult to draw the lines between them with precision.⁶⁷

Another key characteristic position of Puritan 'Spiritism' is the rejection of any secondary causes of grace apart from God's will, and *a fortiori* the human will as a secondary cause of grace. In his defense of his views during the antinomian controversy, Knight writes that

... Cotton describes the saint as ... 'an empty vessell' that 'receyveth oyle: but this receyving is not active, but passive.' But in the 1630s, Cotton understood that the difference between the Spiritual Brethren

⁶⁴ Stoever, *A Faire and Easier Way to Heaven*, 169.

⁶⁵ Stoever, *A Faire and Easier Way to Heaven*, 180–181.

⁶⁶ Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 118.

⁶⁷ See Theodore Dwight Bozeman, *The Precisionist Strain: Disciplinary Religion and Antinomian Backlash in Puritanism to 1638* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2004); and David R. Como, *Blown by the Spirit: Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2004).

and the preparationists turned on this point, arguing: 'An empty vessell actually receyveth oyle poured into it, when it self is passive'—so the Christian receives grace. He is not to be likened to 'a child [who] actively receyveth milke out of his mothers breasts ... by sucking it.' This last simile would claim too much human agency.⁶⁸

Although perhaps never enough to counteract the idea that God capacitates the response requisite of humans, Cotton's *Covenant of Gods Free Grace* (1645) seems to grant further agency to the will. A 'friend of the Author' wrote in the preface that '[t]he condition that is required of us as part of the Covenant, is the performance of these things; to believe, repent, and serve the Lord in newnesse of life: But the power and ability by which wee do them, is a part of the Covenant on Gods part, to have new hearts, and new Spirits, whereby wee come to repentance, and bringing forth fruit worthy of amendment of life. ...'⁶⁹ That is, even though ostensibly the covenant of grace is conditional—a human response is required—God's agency is what finally moves human beings to so respond. In actuality, God gives both the conditional promise and fulfills the condition. In the body of the treatise itself, however, there are passages which suggest an even more thorough-going antinomian strain within the theology of the Spiritual Brethren. Cotton opens the 'Doctrinal Conclusion' published together with *Gods Covenant of Free Grace* with the following proposition: '[t]hat there be in all such as are effectually called and united unto Christ, in-dwelling spirituall gifts of grace, wrought and created in us by the Holy Ghost, that is, by the begetting whereof, we are begotten and renewed to a spirituall life unto God, and so become fit members of his Church.'⁷⁰ Here, he refers to '... holy qualities, the same which Philosophers call *vertuous habites*, or *good dispositions*,⁷¹ which are created in them by the Holy Ghost. Regenerate saints 'live by the gifts of spirituall grace created in them.'⁷² Although Cotton sometimes makes gestures in the direction of real conditionality in the covenant, he shows his true colors, I think, when he states that '... what though wee on our part fail, God hath sworn by his holinesse he will not fail, *Psal.* 89:35.'⁷³

⁶⁸ *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts*, 113; the quotations from Cotton come from *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History*, ed. David D. Hall (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1968), 37–38.

⁶⁹ John Cotton, *The Covenant of Gods Free Grace* (New York: AMS Press, [1645] 1983), preface (unpaginated); italics original.

⁷⁰ Cotton, *Gods Covenant of Free Grace*, 27.

⁷¹ Cotton, *Gods Covenant of Free Grace*, 27; italics original.

⁷² Cotton, *Gods Covenant of Free Grace*, 30; *ibid.*, 32.

⁷³ Cotton, *Gods Covenant of Free Grace*, 16.

Antinomianism and Edwards's Early Published Sermons

To greater or lesser degrees and despite some effort to lessen the force of his affirmations, Edwards in his first two published works holds many of the general features of 'antinomianism' schematized in the foregoing chapters. His views lean mostly in the direction of the immediacy (as opposed to the gradual) indwelling in human regeneration. In *A Divine and Supernatural Light* (1734) he regards 2 Cor. 4: 6, for instance as plainly showing '... that there is such a thing as a discovery of the divine superlative glory and excellency of God and Christ, and that peculiar to the saints: and also that 'tis as immediately from God, as light from the sun: and that 'tis the immediate effect of his power and will; for 'tis compared to God's creating the light by his powerful word in the beginning of the creation'⁷⁴ Although the term 'immediate' appears often in this sermon and *God Glorified in the Work of Redemption, By the Greatness of Man's Dependence upon Him, in the Whole of it ...* (1731), its meaning in even such direct usage requires some exegesis. For example, although all that he mentions in the following passage is absolutely dependent on God, his wording goes against the grain of immediacy in suggesting different phases of spiritual development: '[m]en are dependent on the power of God for every exercise of grace, and for carrying on the work of grace in the heart, for the subduing of sin and corruption, and increasing holy principles, and enabling to bring forth fruit in good works'⁷⁵ The implication that there is a distinction between the immediate bestowal of grace and the gradual development that subsequently takes place, however, must nevertheless be seen to be canceled out by the main thrust of the sermon. The change wrought both in the understanding and in the will by conversion is indeed immediate.⁷⁶ Citing the close proximity of Corinth to Athens and emphasizing that Peter is praised for believing without knowing, Edwards begins his first published work with a depreciation of the knowledge of classical Greece.⁷⁷ The imme-

⁷⁴ 'A Divine and Supernatural LIGHT, Immediately imparted to the Soul by the SPIRIT of GOD, shewn to be both a SCRIPTURAL, and Rational DOCTRINE, In a SERMON Preach'd at Northampton, And Published at the Desire or some of the Hearers' (WJE 17, 418).

⁷⁵ WJE 17, 206.

⁷⁶ WJE 17, 204–205.

⁷⁷ WJE 17, 200. This is not to deny the extent to which, subsequent to conversion, the 'divine and supernatural light' can, in conjunction with reason, achieve heights of knowledge heretofore inaccessible (WJE 17, 415, 422–423). Edwards is only concerned

diacy by which Edwards thinks the 'divine and supernatural light' of conversion comes is directed not only against the gradual and deliberate cultivation of the understanding, but the gradual and deliberate cultivation of the will as well. God communicates God's own holy nature (*via* the indwelling of the Holy Spirit) habitually in a manner Edwards strongly suggests is immediate. That is to say, what actual righteousness the regenerate person possesses *qua* habit is given, not attained through the gradual means normal to other habits.⁷⁸ The difference between God's acting upon a human being in a non-regenerating manner and God's acting upon a human being in a regenerating manner, moreover, is not that the former is passive whereas the latter is active. The difference lies in the fact that only the latter involves a communication of God's own nature. All of God's actions upon human beings are here stipulated as passive.⁷⁹

Edwards's insistence in *A Divine and Supernatural Light* that the redeemed are 'absolutely dependent' on God for all of their good is continued in *God Glorified in the Work of Redemption*, which affirms that 'God is the great author of it; he is the first cause of it, and not only so, but he is the only proper cause.'⁸⁰ Both sentiments would seem to fall under the general heading of a diminished appreciation for the integrity of secondary causes. If even here Edwards tries to soften the blow of such statements by acknowledging that church ordinances are among the mechanisms whereby 'means are made use of in conferring grace on men's souls.'⁸¹ Since he clarifies that '[t]heir success depends entirely and absolutely on the immediate blessing and influence of God', however, much of the sense of his later insistence on the integrity of secondary causes of grace is absent.⁸² He has the opportunity at this juncture to clarify that human beings must also respond to these sources with some modicum of freedom for God's will to be efficacious; but he does not take it. God's causality in regenerating human beings is instead characterized as uniquely efficient without the human conditions concomitantly placed on it in the *Religious Affections* and elsewhere. He explicitly rejects the cooperation model of regeneration, for

to deny that redemption can come through knowledge acquired by natural human means.

⁷⁸ *WJE* 17, 410–411.

⁷⁹ *WJE* 17, 411.

⁸⁰ *WJE* 17, 202.

⁸¹ *WJE* 17, 203.

⁸² *WJE* 17, 203.

instance, ‘... God being not only he *from* or *of* whom we have all good, but also *through* whom and one that is that good itself...’⁸³ The language of ‘all-sufficiency’ accentuates this rejection.⁸⁴ Indeed, he supposes any model of regeneration in which human beings are not wholly dependent on God for the entirety of salvation has the effrontery to displace the glory that is God’s alone.⁸⁵

A Divine and Supernatural Light similarly emphasizes the uniquely efficacious power of divine causality while simultaneously attempting to dull its sharper edges. Edwards suggests, for instance, that ‘[t]he natural faculties are the subject of this light ... in such a manner, that they are not merely passive, but active in it; the acts and exercises of man’s understanding are concerned and made use of in it.’⁸⁶ Similar to *God Glorified in Man’s Dependence*, moreover, he explores the function of church ordinances in *A Divine and Supernatural Light* as the vehicle through which God’s efficacious causality works: ‘[t]he mind can’t see the excellency of any doctrine, unless that doctrine be first in the mind’⁸⁷ Edwards has the similar opportunity, therefore, to stipulate human cooperation with God’s efficient causality in humans making use of their own faculties for the full activation of regenerate sensibilities. But again some hearty qualifications seem to seize back for stringent Calvinism some of what he seemed ready to compromise.⁸⁸ Here the concept of secondary causality is explicitly rejected:

[w]hen it is said that this light is given immediately by God, and not obtained by natural means, hereby is intended, that ’tis given by God without making use of any means that operate by their own power, or a natural force. God makes use of means; but ’tis not as mediate causes to produce this effect. There are not truly any second causes of it; but it is produced by God immediately. The Word of God is no proper cause of this effect: it don’t operate by any natural force in it.⁸⁹

⁸³ *WJE* 17, 212; italics original.

⁸⁴ *WJE* 17, 210–211.

⁸⁵ *WJE* 17, 212.

⁸⁶ *WJE* 17, 416.

⁸⁷ *WJE* 17, 416.

⁸⁸ Robert E. Brown offers a compelling reading of this early sermon from the perspective of the spiritual encounter with The Word that grants greater efficacy to the natural order as a substrate for supernatural insight (*Jonathan Edwards and the Bible* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002], 47–50). This is only one instance that makes good on Brown’s claim of ‘just how important the problems of critical biblical interpretation were to a whole range of theological issues in his thought’ (*ibid.* 163).

⁸⁹ *WJE* 17, 416.

A given doctrine has to be present in the mind already, and so the regenerate must seemingly be in the orbit of the church and the preaching of the Word already to be able to find the doctrine excellent in a supernatural sense. Still, Edwards clarifies, this ‘... don’t argue, that the word properly causes that light.’⁹⁰ ‘[T]hat notion that there is a Christ, and that Christ is holy and gracious, is conveyed to the mind by the word of God: but the sense of the excellency of Christ by reason of that holiness and grace, is nevertheless immediately the work of the Holy Spirit.’⁹¹ Of course, God may also be the author of knowledge that it is possible for human beings to attain and communicate without recourse to the ‘divine and supernatural light.’ In this ‘natural knowledge,’ ‘... flesh and blood is made use of by God as the mediate or second cause of it; he conveys it by the power and influence of natural means.’⁹² But spiritual knowledge can come only ‘immediately’ by God’s agency. ‘[T]his spiritual knowledge, spoken of in the text [Matt. 16:17], is what God is the author of, and none else: he reveals it, and flesh and blood reveals it not. He imparts this knowledge immediately, not making use of any intermediate natural causes, as he does in other knowledge.’⁹³

*The Development of Anti-Antinomianism in
Edwards’s Early Revival Writings*

Between 1737 and 1743, Edwards wrote three books having to do with the revivals, documenting and exploring the many examples of conversion he witnessed in his own and others’ ministries. Each with its own distinctive focus and outlook, these works are fascinating case studies and make it possible to appreciate the development of Edwards’s mature thought on ethics. They reflect Edwards’s preliminary attempts to organize and evaluate individual conversions as to their admixture with ungracious imagination, ungracious passion, longevity, impact on behavior, and from these factors to infer the degree of true religiosity they embodied. Indispensable to the substantially qualified defense

⁹⁰ *WJE* 17, 416.

⁹¹ *WJE* 17, 417.

⁹² *WJE* 17, 409; see also 422–423.

⁹³ *WJE* 17, 409; see also 422–423.

of revivalism contained in the later treatise is Edwards's eyewitness account of many conversions wrought in the highest effulgences of revivalistic fervor, which nevertheless proved to yield 'much heat but little light.' That is to say, they produced powerful temporary effects of affective agitation without casting the character of the professor in the mold of consistent Christian charity. Edwards never repudiated his original insistence that the Spirit of God was at work in the revivals. But in each successive study, he was forced by circumstances to qualify his earlier, less critical apologies for them.

In *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God* (1737), the ambitious young Edwards sought to make his reputation in the increasingly international evangelical community. Its character is mainly an uncritical acceptance of evangelical fervor at its face value, as is evident in a letter Edwards originally published in the *Boston Gazette*, later reprinted by the London editors of the first edition.⁹⁴ In it he describes a collapsing meeting house gallery in which no one was seriously injured as a 'sufficient argument of a divine providence over the lives of men,' when '[i]t looked as though it was impossible it should be otherwise, than that great numbers should instantly be crushed to death or dashed in pieces.'⁹⁵ In tone and rhetoric, the work is a wholly positive, highly idealized vision of not only an entire town (Northampton) but the outlying areas of several contiguous counties under the auspices of an exacting providential design. Compare a similarly enthusiastic report of the moral transformation accompanying the revival of the spring and summer of 1735 in Northampton:

This work of God, as it was carried on, and the number of true saints multiplied, soon made a glorious alteration in the town; so that ... it never was so full of love, nor so full of joy; and yet so full of distress, as it was then. ... Our public assemblies were then beautiful; the congregation was alive in God's service, everyone earnestly intent on the public worship, every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth; the assembly in general were, from time to time, in tears while the Word was preached; some weeping with sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for the souls of their neighbors.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ *The Boston Gazette*, No. 899 [March 28-April 4, 1737], 2-3; reprinted in *WJE* 4, 134-136.

⁹⁵ *WJE* 4, 135-136.

⁹⁶ *WJE* 4, 151.

Like the precise placement of so many sticks of timber, God worked the regeneration and conversion of what is described as a vast majority of the inhabitants of Northampton. Conversion was so widespread that, as Edwards would have it, '[a] loose, careless person could scarcely find a companion in the whole neighborhood; and if there was anyone that seemed to remain senseless or unconcerned, it would be spoken of as a strange thing.'⁹⁷

At only one point in this first work does Edwards entertain the possibility of a less than glorious reality behind the glorious exterior of Northampton's revival; and even then it is hypothetical. 'I am very sensible how apt many would be,' he writes, 'if they should see the account I have here given ... to think that, for want of judgment, I take every religious pang and enthusiastic conceit for saving conversion; and I don't much wonder if they should be apt to think so: and for this reason I have forborne to publish an account of this great work of God, though I have often been put upon it'⁹⁸ Edwards does answer this possible criticism, but not until quite late in the work, immediately prior to his consideration of two notable Northampton converts—Abigail Hutchinson and the four-year-old Phebe Bartlet. When he does answer it, he categorically denies that the wheat of genuine religious experience was outweighed by the chaff of lively imaginations and 'bodily' visions.⁹⁹ Indeed, the most critical judgment in this text is applied by its two London editors, Isaac Watts and John Guyse. Though they are ultimately satisfied that the evidence supports the conclusion that a genuine instance of God's redemptive hand was at work in Northampton, they note how fears of damnation and natural disasters can influence counterfeit conversions.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps more to the point is a second observation made by Watts and Guyse: '... when many profane sinners and formal professors of religion have been affrighted out of their present carelessness and stupidity by some astonishing terrors approaching them, those religious appearances have not been so durable, nor the real change of heart so thoroughly effected'¹⁰¹ In time, Edwards will take up the brunt of these criticisms; but here, in this first study of the revivals, such critical distance is almost entirely absent.

⁹⁷ *WJE* 4, 157.

⁹⁸ *WJE* 4, 159–160.

⁹⁹ *WJE* 4, 188–189.

¹⁰⁰ *WJE* 4, 133.

¹⁰¹ *WJE* 4, 133–134.

Given in an abbreviated form at the Yale Commencement of 1741, *The Distinguishing Marks of a Work of the Spirit of God* (1741) represents a first step in the direction of Edwards's later position. From the text on which Edwards chose to base the address, 1 John 4:1: 'Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God; because many false prophets are gone out into the world,'¹⁰² the audience might have inferred that he no longer took every spirit coming out of the revivals as automatically a spirit of God. And although he remained a staunch advocate of the revivalist movement, this was indeed the case. From the very outset, he raises the possibility that some of the effects of the revivals could be counterfeit. It was now 'very necessary that the church of Christ should be furnished with some certain rules, and distinguishing and clear marks by which she might proceed safely in judging of spirits, and distinguish the true from the false,'¹⁰³ but what criteria would he suggest? In his previous work, his most critical reflection is to admit that 'visual imaginings' of dubious religious significance might accompany true religious experience. In this context, the task of the apologist for the revivals was not so much a matter of distinguishing the true manifestations of the Spirit from the false, but separating the appropriate experiences of true religious experience from the inappropriate expressions of true religious experience. The most notable development in this connection arises with regard to the fourth 'not-sign' of a true spirit of God.¹⁰⁴ For here, not only does he argue, as he does in *A Faithful Narrative*, that lively imaginings do not prove that a soul exhibits the saving evidence of the Spirit,¹⁰⁵ he argues that it fails to prove a soul does not exhibit it either.¹⁰⁶

Edwards begins to separate himself most fully from other contingents within the pro-revival movement in the third and final point under the 'application' of the work.¹⁰⁷ Addressing himself to 'those that

¹⁰² *WJE* 4, 226.

¹⁰³ *WJE* 4, 226.

¹⁰⁴ Goen instructively labels Edwards's 'negative' observations regarding the distinguishing marks of a spirit of God 'not-signs.' This term is meant to capture that a condition *x* is not a distinguishing mark either that a spirit of God obtains or that a spirit of God does not obtain in a given circumstance.

¹⁰⁵ *WJE* 4, 188–189.

¹⁰⁶ *WJE* 4, 235.

¹⁰⁷ The 'application' was traditionally the final portion of the sermon form followed by most Puritan divines. For a discussion of Edwards's use of this sermon division see Wilson H. Kinnach, 'General Introduction to the Sermons: Jonathan Edwards' Art of Prophesying,' *WJE* 10, 18, 36, 39–40, 104, 121.

are the friends of this work, and have been partakers of it, and are zealous to promote it,¹⁰⁸ he earnestly exhorts them to '... give diligent heed ... to avoid all errors and misconduct, and whatsoever may darken and obscure the work'¹⁰⁹ But the beginnings of a broad critique of antinomian revivalism is only inaugurated in Edwards's discussion of a distinction made in I Cor.: 12 between the ordinary and extraordinary signs of the spirit of God. Edwards observes that one reason why many of his fellow revivalists had been so quick to grant validity to '... impulses and strong impressions on ... [the mind], as though they were immediate significations from heaven to them of something that should come to pass, or something that it was the mind and will of God that they should do'¹¹⁰ was that these 'extraordinary gifts of the Spirit' were widely considered to be a harbinger of the coming of the looked-for Millennium. But in this work Edwards begins to be critical of this opinion, which he believes '... arises partly through want of duly considering and comparing the nature and value of those two kinds of influences of the Spirit, viz. his ordinary gracious influences, and his extraordinary influences in inspiration and miraculous gifts.'¹¹¹ Edwards suggests that Paul's real intent in his first letter to the Corinthians is to subordinate the importance of extraordinary influences of the Spirit to the ordinary. In contrast to many of his fellow revivalists, Edwards then clarifies that he does not '... expect a restoration of these miraculous gifts in the approaching glorious times of the church'¹¹² Nor does he desire it: '... it appears to me that it would add nothing to the glory of those times, but rather diminish from it.'¹¹³

Despite increasingly critical qualification, Edwards remains unabashedly pro-revival in his third book-length study of the revivals, *Some Thoughts Concerning the Present Revival of Religion in New England*. Each of the five headings on the frontispiece is expressed in positive terms. But the overall structure of the work must be seen to expand his cri-

¹⁰⁸ *WJE* 4, 276.

¹⁰⁹ *WJE* 4, 276.

¹¹⁰ *WJE* 4, 278.

¹¹¹ *WJE* 4, 278.

¹¹² *WJE* 4, 281.

¹¹³ *WJE* 4, 281. In *Some Thoughts* he will go so far as to muse that "[t]is probable that hereafter the discoveries which the saints shall have of divine things will be ... so ordered of an infinitely wise and all-sufficient God, that they shall not have so great an effect in proportion on the body, and will be less oppressive to nature. ...' (*WJE* 4, 466).

tique of antinomianism from excesses to positive evils.¹¹⁴ Most prominent among the latter is the increase in pride he thought very commonly accompanied 'raised' spiritual experiences.¹¹⁵ In an attempt to overcome or avoid these evils, he will advocate a species of revivalism informed by, and corrigible with regard to, both rational thought and Scripture.¹¹⁶ Four key admissions demonstrate the new levels of criticism to which he is willing to rise in his modified revivalism.

The first admission is with regard to the fallibility of the converted and opens a door to criticism of the revivals heretofore closed. Recall that in the *Distinguishing Marks* he admits the possibility of counterfeit manifestations of the Spirit as well as the possibility that the extraordinary fruits of the Spirit may be adjoined with many extraordinary influences not intrinsically related to the real work of sanctification. Using the language of the later *Treatise Concerning the Religious Affections*, he said that there was much dross intermingled with the gold of regeneration. In *Some Thoughts*, however, Edwards goes further than this to affirm that gracious inspiration does not rule out errors in judgment and conduct. 'That would be a strange thing indeed,' he remarks, 'if in so great a commotion and revolution, and such a new state of things, wherein so many have been engaged, none have been guilty of any imprudence; it would be such a revival of religion as never was yet'¹¹⁷ The general admission that gracious inspirations did not ineluctably eventuate in perfect judgment or perfect conduct leads to a further caveat relevant to criticizers and promoters of revivalism alike: even the genuine influences of the Spirit do not work moral transformations all of a piece. '... [T]he end of the influence of the Spirit of God is not to increase men's natural capacities, nor,' after all, 'has God obliged himself immediately to increase civil prudence in proportion to the degrees of spiritual light.'¹¹⁸

A second development in Edwards's critique of 'antinomian' revivalism moves beyond the admission of dross within the pure gold of gracious experiences to an admission of the possibility of admixtures of sanctified dispositions with vicious.¹¹⁹ Whereas in the former case, a substance was added to the precious gold which, though it did not

¹¹⁴ *WJE* 4, 314–315.

¹¹⁵ *WJE* 4, 315, 414, 416–417.

¹¹⁶ *WJE* 4, 291–292.

¹¹⁷ *WJE* 4, 410.

¹¹⁸ *WJE* 4, 323.

¹¹⁹ *WJE* 4, 322.

detract from its inherent value, could make it seem less beautiful to untrained eyes (like precious gems and metal wrought into an unfashionable piece of jewelry),¹²⁰ in the latter case, the precious substance is mixed with substances that not only compromise its beauty but necessarily lessen its value (as in the case of smelting a precious metal with a corrosive ore like iron). In its early formations, the proportion of grace to sin in the regenerate soul could be so minimal, the proportion of unconverted habits and sentiments to charity so maximal, as to make that soul ugly to all but the closest inspection. In a wonderfully graphic image, Edwards observes that ‘... like the chicken in the egg, in the beginning of its formation, in which, though there are indeed the rudiments or lineaments of all the parts, yet some few parts are plain to be seen when others are hid, so that without a microscope it appears very monstrous.’¹²¹ Contrary to radical Spiritists, then, who claimed that the indwelling of the Holy Spirit made not only their uprightness, but their spiritual judgment, unassailable, Edwards is again insisting the regenerate remain open to the correction of both Scripture and reason.

In a third and related point, Edwards goes so far as to admit that increases in spiritual goodness may not only coexist with sizable remainders of unregenerate habits and sentiments, they may directly motivate a person to evil actions.¹²² In this admission, we see a further step from a position akin to John Cotton and the ‘Spiritual Brethren’ to a position more akin to the ‘Intellectual Fathers’—that is to say, a conception of grace that, like Ames’s, respects the dignity of the human person as rationally governed by God, even as it invokes a high degree of dependence on grace.¹²³ For if under the former conception of grace admixtures of gracious affections and as yet unregenerate affections do coexist in the same person, only in the latter conception can a spiritual affection directly lead to an act contrary to God’s will. The will must be in some sense free to follow its own counsels even if it is inconsistent with the directives of divine inspiration.

Edwards’s fourth admission is a denial of various permutations of the reliance of the ‘Spiritual Brethren’ on immediate revelation. He repeats that the extraordinary effects of the Spirit are not to be desired

¹²⁰ For Edwards, a true connoisseur of the process of regeneration, godly influences may even be more beautiful in their juxtaposition with the earthen vessel wherein they are held (*WJE* 4, 323).

¹²¹ *WJE* 4, 463.

¹²² *WJE* 4, 316.

¹²³ See, for instance, Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, I. 10. 9; ed. Eusden, 111.

for their own sake;¹²⁴ but goes considerably beyond it to reinforce the idea that the converted must remain open to correction by reason and Scripture. Grace does not come into the soul in its fully formed state but mediated through the ordinary substrate of the human person, the will, the affections, the habits and actions, etc. ‘This error,’ he notes, ‘will defend and support all errors.’¹²⁵ Even more heatedly, he admits that ‘[b]y such a notion the Devil has a great door opened for him; and if once this opinion should come to be fully yielded to and established in the church of God, Satan would have opportunity thereby to set up himself as the guide and oracle of God’s people, and to have his word regarded as their infallible rule, and so to lead ’em where he would, and to introduce what he pleased’¹²⁶ The expectation that grace comes with immediate revelations of answers to specific questions or specific directions for action opens up the converted unnecessarily to the possibility of error beyond the inescapable residual imperfections given fallen human nature. It augments and stimulates what for Edwards is the most destructive of all of human faculties, the imagination.¹²⁷ If any proper interpretation of these ‘imaginings’ is to be had, moreover, Edwards insists it ought to come from Scripture and reason which together call the converted back to the firm ground of the practical syllogism: look for assurance of justification from evidence of one’s *sanctification*.¹²⁸

Secondary Causes in the Treatise Concerning Religious Affections

We have already taken up Edwards’s earlier critique of radical revivalism on the grounds that what the Holy Spirit communicates is neither a fact about God nor a fact about the believer’s relationship to God but God’s love itself. It is not until the *Religious Affections*, however, that he considers the furthest implications of this trajectory of thought. Even after the first blush of his ebullient confidence in the revivals waned, Edwards could grant that the experience of receiving charity from the Spirit’s indwelling *feels* immediate. Nor does the revivalistically cool

¹²⁴ *WJE* 4, 436.

¹²⁵ *WJE* 4, 432–433.

¹²⁶ *WJE* 4, 432.

¹²⁷ *WJE* 4, 438–439.

¹²⁸ *WJE* 4, 297–299.

year of 1746 arrive to find Edwards unable to grant that conversion allows for a contrast between heretofore being in spiritual darkness and at one point newly, ‘immediately,’ having spiritual light. But there is another sense of the ‘immediacy’ of grace Edwards cannot admit without confounding the most intentional aims of the *Religious Affections*. He has moved from a more open-ended conception of what is ‘spiritual’ to a considerably more narrow range of affections emanating from a sanctified, or virtuous character. ‘... [T]hough the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, which natural men might have, are sometimes called spiritual, because they are from the Spirit ...,’ he writes in the 1746 work, ‘yet natural men, whatever gifts of the Spirit they had, were not, in the usual language of the New Testament, called spiritual persons. For it was not by men’s having the gifts of the Spirit, but by their having the virtues of the Spirit, that they were called spiritual persons’¹²⁹ The *Religious Affections* is philosophically opposed to religious enthusiasm, that is, defined as a stance which allows spiritual truths to be immediately revealed to a person outside of the context of the virtuous habits. This strong point of contention between the mature Edwards and the young Edwards is not fully appreciated in the secondary literature. In the remainder of the chapter I will be venturing to show how his critique of the ‘antinomian’ denial of secondary causes of grace reaches an unprecedented forcefulness and level of consolidation around the analysis of habits outlined in Chapter 1. The cluster of philosophical problems at its theological core is nevertheless complex and requires breaking down into four sub-components.

The first corollary of love (read sanctified charity) being the content of what is communicated by the Holy Spirit is that habitual dispositions are the substrate by means of which Christian righteousness inheres within the regenerate self. Some of the most prevalent images for the communication of grace in the Edwardsean corpus are the light of a lamp, the water in a fountain, the seed in soil. In all of these cases—and explanations along these lines abound in the *Religious Affections*—there is a medium or vehicle without which the substance of a thing could not manifest itself and fully become what it is. Without the structure of the lamp, the light cannot shine. Without the structure of the fountain, the water cannot be propelled into the air and captured again. Without the structure of the soil, the seed cannot germinate, etc. Holiness, Edwards

¹²⁹ *WJE* 2, 199.

similarly argues in this text, cannot be a quality that coexists with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit but then does not leave any residual tendency or habit when its influence is less pronounced.¹³⁰ The experience of divine love is not immediate in the sense of being unmediated by human cognitive and affective faculties. Love is an affection and we saw in Chapter 2 that it was not without certain cognitive perceptions as well. '[T]o expect that the Spirit of God will savingly operate upon their minds without the Spirit's making use of means, as subservient to the effect,' is accordingly 'enthusiastical'.¹³¹ The means of grace here are the exercises of the human cognitive and affective faculties themselves, the patterns of thinking, feeling, and willing that engage around character traits as they form and are fine-tuned by experience, reflection and purposive action. That Edwards uses the epithet 'enthusiastical' in the above diatribe, a pejorative rallying cry for anti-revivalists during the Great Awakening and frequently applied to himself, makes this already explicit critique all the more poignant.

A second feature of divine love's emanation we can correlate to the fruition of his account of secondary causality concerns the make-up of the human person. When he compares grace '... to a seed implanted, that not only is in the ground, but has hold of it, has root there, and grows there, and is an abiding principle of life and nature there,'¹³² we saw in Chapter 2 that his view of Christian righteousness is substantially inherent rather than univocally imputed. The Holy Spirit is not merely hovering around the soul, or indwelling in a manner covering over a core that somehow retains its own independent and inextricably fallen nature. Rather, the Holy Spirit 'is given to the true saints to dwell in them, as his proper lasting abode; and to influence their hearts ... as a divine supernatural spring of life and action ... so united to the faculties of the soul, that he becomes there a principle or spring of new nature and life.'¹³³ We have expanded our awareness of the multiple resonances of this 'spring' or 'new nature' in the present discussion of secondary causality. God is always the primary cause of the *ordo salutis*.¹³⁴ Without the preexisting love communicated by the Holy Spirit, human beings would not be able to become transmitters of it. But without the habitual

¹³⁰ *WJE* 2, 342.

¹³¹ *WJE* 2, 138.

¹³² *WJE* 2, 343.

¹³³ *WJE* 2, 200–201.

¹³⁴ *WJE* 3, 400.

make-up of the human person, like so much conductive metal for the transference of an electric current, there is no substrate by which transmission can occur. Edwards increasingly shared the confidence of Knight's 'Intellectual Fathers' in God's ordained power and, as part of this, God's continued benevolent intention of dealing with human beings in a way that respects their rational nature. It surely refers to the rational nature, for instance, when Edwards seeks to safeguard the integrity of the connection between the inner workings of the human will and outward action. '...[T]is known,' he writes, '... that these commanding acts of the will are not one way, and the actions of the bodily organs another: for the unalterable law of nature is, that they should be united'¹³⁵ For Edwards, moreover, it is God *qua* author of nature, who has ordained this connection: '... the motions of the body follow from the laws of union between the soul and body, which God, and not the soul has fixed, and does maintain.'¹³⁶ The new nature is not conveyed in such a way that the integrity of the will is violated.¹³⁷ Rather, Edwards routinely argues against the antinomian revivalists, '... spiritual practice in man, is the practice of a spirit and body jointly, or the practice of a spirit, animating, commanding and actuating a body, to which it is united, and over which it has power given it by the Creator.'¹³⁸

A third feature of the consolidated vision of secondary causality in the *Religious Affections* concerns how the will cooperates in the process of regeneration. Conversion cannot be a transformation to which the person not only yielded but which she desired without the indwelling of the Holy Spirit being in some sense contingent upon the will's consent.¹³⁹ In the case of the antinomian program of 'immediate revelation,' even if the person were to receive the habit of charity, the agency behind the habit's power resided wholly outside of the person. For Edwards in contrast, '[a]ll the exercises of grace are entirely from Christ,' in the sense of efficient causality, 'but those exercises are not from Christ, as something that is alive, moves and stirs something that is without life, and yet remains without life....'¹⁴⁰ Rather, spiritual life is communi-

¹³⁵ *WJE* 2, 425.

¹³⁶ *WJE* 2, 423.

¹³⁷ Ames, *The Marrow of Theology*, 1. 9. 5–6, ed. Eusden, 107.

¹³⁸ *WJE* 2, 450.

¹³⁹ Perry Miller, 'Preparation for Salvation in Seventeenth-Century New England,' *The Journal of the History of Ideas*, 4 (June 1943): 261.

¹⁴⁰ *WJE* 2, 342.

cated to it, ‘... so as through Christ’s power, to have inherent in itself, a vital nature.’¹⁴¹ The dignity and vitality of this newly communicated ‘spring of life’ means that the consent of the will is a perpetual second cause to the perpetually required primary cause of God’s grace.¹⁴² The distinction Edwards makes between legal humiliation and evangelical humiliation inextricably binds being moved by the Holy Spirit to being ‘... brought sweetly to yield, and freely and with delight to prostrate themselves at the feet of God.’¹⁴³ This reading has further support in the way he restricts the kind of actions that may be qualified as obedient to God’s will to those that arise out of the *pondus* of a soul.¹⁴⁴ When describing what kind of acts reflect the Christian practice indicative of truly religious affections, Edwards stipulates, ‘[n]either is every kind of inward exercise of grace meant; but that practical exercise, that exercise of the soul, and exertion of inward holiness, which there is in an obediential act; or that exertion of the mind, and act of grace, which issues and terminates in what they call the imperate acts of the will; in which something is directed and commanded by the soul to be done, and brought to pass in practice.’¹⁴⁵ More will be said about the function of church ordinances in Edwardsean spiritual and moral development in Chapter 6. But it is worth noting now that if the affections are part of the substrate providing the necessary second causes to the efficient cause of God’s redemptive will, then indeed, Edwards argues, ‘... such means are to be desired, as have much of a tendency to move the affections. Such books, and such a way of preaching the Word, and administration of ordinances, and such a way of worshipping God in prayer, and singing praises, is much to be

¹⁴¹ *WJE* 2, 342.

¹⁴² Consent is the theme of ‘Miscellanies’ No. 299. It would seem that he here grants that consent is within the venue of human agency. But on the other hand, nearby ‘Miscellanies’ No. 329 stipulates that faith is regarded as a kind of believing rather than a kind of choosing to dispel any sense of ‘moral goodness or excellency’ that would be tantamount to ‘works’ (*WJE* 13, 407). In ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1045, however, accepting Christ as Savior seems to take on a more autonomous and pre-conditional role to receiving Christ as Savior. It is notable, too, that the concept of a human being as ‘an intelligent, voluntary agent capable of act and choice’ is concurrently invoked. Shortly after this passage, however, it must be noted that the concept of preparation, what God, ‘if he pleased ... could bring to pass ... with out any preparation,’ is described as an act of God too (*WJE* 20, 393).

¹⁴³ *WJE* 2, 312.

¹⁴⁴ This view was discussed at some length in Chapter 1.

¹⁴⁵ *WJE* 2, 422.

desired, as has a tendency deeply to affect the hearts of those who attend these means.¹⁴⁶ Accordingly, ‘... for any to expect to receive the saving influences of the Spirit of God, while they neglect a diligent improvement of the appointed means of grace, is unreasonable presumption.’¹⁴⁷ Merely going through the motions of the church sacraments, engaging in prayer without full consent to God, almsgiving with ulterior motives, these practices will not further internalize sanctified charity.

Diverse Traditions and Intersecting Discourses: Edwards’s Mature View

The taxonomy with which I began this chapter is important for showing that the precise correlation of created and increated grace in regenerate charity, the extent and nature of human freedom, and the ontological status of the forms making up the current order of the world are all in play in the concept of secondary causality. It is, decidedly, a much more complicated question than merely an all or nothing acceptance or rejection of God as the only true cause. We have seen many types and strengths of divine sovereignty are clearly compatible with it. It was also important to demonstrate that different thinkers align themselves differently on different aspects of the issue. The basic outline of Edwards’s position conforms to the basic outline of Thomism. He affirms secondary causes in some sense, affirms some degree of human substrate in the virtue of charity, and grants the present order as embodying something more than an arbitrary chosen possible world, while at the same time siding with Thomism on the rejection of the substantial conception of freedom and extrinsically applied modality of grace in Molinism.¹⁴⁸ These judgments require qualification as there are isolated passages where Edwards does affirm something like occasional-

¹⁴⁶ *WJE* 2, 121. Perry Miller emphasized this aspect of Puritan thought in *Errand in the Wilderness* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1956; Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap, 1982), 167–183. 167–183.

¹⁴⁷ *WJE* 2, 138.

¹⁴⁸ Richard A. Muller’s assessment that in critiquing inroads of ‘middle knowledge’ into Reformed orthodoxy William Tisbe had ‘a clearer perception than many of his contemporaries of the significance of Aristotle for traditional orthodoxy and, in his view, of the problematic character of Platonism—not to mention his sense of the positive relationship between the great medieval doctors and the Reformed tradition’ (*Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics*, Vol. 3, 115) is highly suggestive for the English

ism. He also routinely uses the term ‘arbitrary’ in describing aspects of the divine will in creating and sustaining the creation (more on this below). For these (and other) reasons, some scholars have presumed that he adopted an occasionalist position in something like a global sense.¹⁴⁹ Such a line of interpretation does not, however, stand up to closer scrutiny. The strongest case for Edwards’s occasionalism yet made must in the end admit that some of the textual evidence is based on interpretations that have equally plausible non-occasionalist readings.¹⁵⁰ It is significant, moreover, that some of the positions he did intermittently maintain which have made some assume an occasionalist position—the most cited of these are his statement in *Original Sin* that the continuation of the universe is so intimately connected with God’s activity that it makes best sense to think of it being created anew in each successive moment—have been identified by contemporary philosophers as compatible with a conception of secondary causes.¹⁵¹ Jonathan Kvanvig and Hugh McCann have argued that the supposition that continuous creation commits one to the occasionalist view that ‘no effect in nature is

context in which Edwards’s developed his conception of secondary causes by means of both Reformed orthodoxy and the Cambridge Platonists.

¹⁴⁹ Norman Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought*, 51–52, 279–280, 307–308; Avihu Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards’s Philosophy of History: The Reenchantment of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 101–108; Charles J. McCracken, *Malebranche and British Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 316–319, 329–340. Douglas J. Elwood does not use the occasionalism of Malebranche as a primary interpretive lense, but his general discussion of Edwards’s views of God’s relationship to the creation do attribute to him a rejection of secondary causes in anything but linguistic convenience (*The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1960], 12–64). Even as he seeks to distance him from the strongest form of occasionalism, Sang Lee wishes to preserve for him ‘not an unqualified occasionalist position’ (*The Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, Expanded Edition [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000], 63). Holfield hits closer to the mark in seeking to encompass both Edwards’s ‘desire to evoke a sense of divine presence by showing that the world depended, at each moment, on God’s creative power’ and his recognition that ‘[m]ost divine action was “mixed,” combining both natural and arbitrary operations’ (*Theology in America*, 112).

¹⁵⁰ Oliver D. Crisp, ‘How “Occasional” was Edwards’s Occasionalism?’, in *Jonathan Edwards Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003), 74. What makes Crisp’s treatment so helpful is that, all without failing to critically register both Edwards’s diversity of answers in different passages and periodic internal inconsistency within passages, he identifies several different gradations of position spanning strong occasionalism, weak occasionalism, non-occasionalist ‘concurrentism’ and the ‘continuous creation’ theory.

¹⁵¹ *WJE* 3, 402–403.

really brought about by natural or secondary causal agents, but rather only by God Himself' is misconceived.¹⁵² Philip L. Quinn has outlined three different conceptions of secondary causes none of which are incompatible with a conception of God sustaining the universe, even God continually creating the universe anew.¹⁵³ These contemporary philosophical considerations can only be suggestive, of course. Edwards might not have agreed and philosophical developments in between the eighteenth- and the twenty-first centuries are surely to have construed some of the philosophical alternatives differently. But if we look at the above four theological dimensions of secondary causality from the perspective of the local polemics that circumscribe Edwards's encounter with early modern philosophy, a corroborating picture of nevertheless comes into focus.

Edwards's basic position is to affirm secondary causes with the one hand against antinomianism but assert a strong conception of God's sovereignty *qua* first cause against Arminianism with the other. In this two-sided polemic, he is fully in conformity with seventeenth-century 'Intellectual Fathers,' some of whom directly battled with Anne Hutcheson and others in the famous 'Antinomian Controversy' that sought to forestall any open-ended toleration of radical dissent by cordoning off an 'official' orthodoxy. Thomas Shepard was prominent among them. Shepard argued in *The Sound Believer* that '... sanctification is not the immediate operations of the Spirit upon us, without created habits of grace abiding in us, as the spirit that came upon Balaam, and mightily affected him for a time, but left him as destitute of any grace or change of his nature as the ass he rode on.'¹⁵⁴ Despite divine love's felt immediacy, Edwards can be regarded as adding the detail that, '... the sight of ... [the saint's] relative union with God, and his being in his favor, is not without a medium, because he sees it by that medium, viz. his love'¹⁵⁵ Likewise for Samuel Willard, regeneration is a matter of the infusion of gracious habits in which 'a *Principle* or *Power* [is] infused

¹⁵² Jonathan Kvanvig and Hugh McCann, 'Divine Conservation and the Persistence of the World,' in Morris, ed., *Divine and Human Action*, 16.

¹⁵³ Philip L. Quinn, 'Divine Conservation, Secondary Causes, and Occasionalism,' in Morris, ed., *Divine and Human Action*, 50–73.

¹⁵⁴ See *The Sound Believer*, in *The Works of Thomas Shepard, First Pastor of the First Church, Cambridge, Mass., with a Memoir of His Life and Character*, ed. John A. Albo (Boston: Doctrinal Tract Society, 1853), Vol. 1, 206. Edwards, perhaps influenced by Shepard, also cites the story of Balaam (*WJE* 2, 206–207).

¹⁵⁵ *WJE* 2, 239.

into us, to render us capable of exerting them¹⁵⁶ The habit made possible by a supernaturally infused principle is further ‘called Active, because it is really exerted by the Penitent himself; for tho’ the Spirit giveth us Power, yet it is not *He* that Repents, but *we*; for the Action formally proceeds from us’¹⁵⁷ Similar to the concept of secondary causality we have been discussing, ‘[t]here is ... something that the Spirit doth of himself, and something that the man doth by the help of the Spirit.’¹⁵⁸ But Willard explicitly pulls back from the term cooperation, insisting that the Holy Spirit and human beings ‘do not act as two joynt efficients, dividing the work between them, as being equally concerned in it; and so take each his part to do: or, as if we were to do what we can, and the Spirit were to do the rest.’¹⁵⁹ It is illustrative that when discussing perseverance in grace, Willard prefers to use the term ‘second hand’ rather than second cause. This allows him to emphasize that it is indeed God’s hand which holds up whatever at one level of description is the human hand’s ‘will’, ‘intention’ or ‘consent’ to grace. Such a support is required, for instance, if the reception of The Word is to accompany the reading or hearing of Scripture.¹⁶⁰ ‘When the Spirit of God hath put his Grace into us in our Renovation,’ he notes, ‘there needs a second Hand to be afforded to them, for their Preservation.’¹⁶¹ This in itself could hide a fairly substantial conception of autonomous volition. But Willard qualifies that while ‘in progressive Sanctification, we are Agents, and are helped by the Spirit of God in killing of concupiscence in us ... yet in the infusion of this Grace into us, we are passive, and he is the alone Agent; tho’ in the order of the bringing it about he useth Instruments, yet he alone doth the work by a creating Power.’¹⁶² Edwards’s arguments for keeping God directly, intimately, and immediately (in the sense of the Holy Spirit being constantly active rather than in the sense being entirely unmediated through habits) are too well established from Chapter 2 to need more than cursory restatement here. As the divine nature itself, true virtue cannot be achieved through autonomous human expansion of

¹⁵⁶ Samuel Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity* (Boston: 1726; New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), 794.

¹⁵⁷ Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity*, 795.

¹⁵⁸ Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity*, 458.

¹⁵⁹ Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity*, 458.

¹⁶⁰ Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity*, 829.

¹⁶¹ Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity*, 521.

¹⁶² Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity*, 497.

natural powers. Viewed against the backdrop of merely human perceptions of beauty and obligation fails to perceive the truly unconditional aspects of true virtue. Moreover, contrary to Hobbes's 'voluntarist' conception of the relationship between the divine will and the creation, Edwards regarded virtue as non-contingently commensurate with the ordained order *qua* emanation of God's being and purpose.¹⁶³ What is more compelling to note in the way of conclusion is that when we see that Willard's (i) indefatigable connection of all subsequent graces (e.g., repentance and obedience) to the habit of grace antecedently created in a passive human being by God comes paired with (ii) his confidence that all the 'Orthodox' regard the Holy Spirit's influences as 'immutable and perpetual,'¹⁶⁴ we see that Edwards grants even more independence to secondary causality than even those Puritans with whom he shares much of the heritage of Protestant scholasticism.

Coming from late in Edwards's career during the Stockbridge period, 'Miscellanies' No. 1263 is a helpful focal point in solidifying the portion of Edwards's mature ethical position dealing with secondary causality, particularly as it has been used by scholars to argue for an occasionalist-type position. The most general thrust of the entry is to challenge the Deist supposition that God acted 'immediately' upon the creation only once in the establishment of the laws of nature and then left it to operate autonomously from the divine will by the fixed laws of nature. What has understandably moved some interpreters to adopt an occasionalist-type view of this entry is the centrality of God's 'arbitrary operation' in Edwards's counter-argument about the creation.¹⁶⁵ It is anathema to Edwards to countervail the supposition that God does 'continue to act towards the world he made.'¹⁶⁶ His discussion of this point has several permutations. First, he insists that what the Deists don't appreciate in metaphysically sealing the current instantiation of the world from any further changes to its law-like continuance is that it was God's 'arbitrary' will that created those fixed laws in the first

¹⁶³ Oliver Crisp's otherwise incisive treatment of the correlation of God's arbitrariness and law-like procession of the world's natural operations in 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, though supplemented by several passages from the treatise on freedom of the will and original sin, still remains disconnected from the rest of the Edwardsean corpus on this latter point (Crisp, 'How Occasional?,' in *Jonathan Edwards Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Helm and Crisp, 73).

¹⁶⁴ Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity*, 520.

¹⁶⁵ Crisp, 'Edwards's Occasionalism,' 71–75; Lee, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 21, 53–55.

¹⁶⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, *WJE* 23, 201.

place. Second, Edwards denies that God's activity is limited to the fixed laws of nature even in the present. God brought about the establishment and building up of the church 'by several remarkable degrees, periods at each of which God appears in an extraordinary manner and operates by an arbitrary influence.'¹⁶⁷ His main examples of this are the patriarchs of Judaism, the incarnation and virgin birth, the ministry of Jesus and the apostles, and 'God's sovereign, arbitrary interposition and influence' on the 'hearts' of the newly converted.¹⁶⁸ Third and finally, similar to the Neoplatonic hierarchy of Being developed in the *Two Dissertations*, Edwards subsequently affirms a hierarchy of creation with 'arbitrariness' at the apogee. God's creation of the world *ex nihilo*, admitted even by Deists, is the act of God that is most purely arbitrary. 'Tis the glory of God that he is an arbitrary being, that originally he, in all things, acts as being limited and directed in nothing but his own wisdom, tied to no other rules and laws but the directions of his own infinite understanding.'¹⁶⁹ 'Naturalness' is the modality of being that most defines the lower orders; and the gradations and permutations between it and arbitrariness are many. Edwards identifies a variety of 'mixed' operations which are 'partly arbitrary and partly by stated laws.'¹⁷⁰ Human minds, somewhere in the middle, are able to move their bodies by 'the act of their wills without being directed merely by the impulse and attraction of other bodies'¹⁷¹ Despite being created by God according to certain natural laws, e.g., of psychology, neurology, etc., Edwards nevertheless grants humans 'a secondary and dependent arbitrariness' by means of the *imago dei*.¹⁷²

All of these passages give testimony to Edwards's concern to maintain God as the first cause of all other events in the creation. What has been obscured in discussions of this entry seeking to defend various forms of an occasionalist interpretation, however, is the tremendous range of qualifications that that come with this concept of arbitrariness. It is not, emphatically, the arbitrariness of every event being absolutely unaffected by any power of change but God's, a conception wrongfully made global from the usual Reformed meaning of arbitrariness

¹⁶⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, *WJE* 23, 209.

¹⁶⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, *WJE* 23, 211.

¹⁶⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, *WJE* 23, 202–203.

¹⁷⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, *WJE* 23, 205.

¹⁷¹ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, *WJE* 23, 203.

¹⁷² 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, *WJE* 23, 203.

of God's predestining which humans to save.¹⁷³ Richard A. Muller is highly instructive in noting the inappropriateness of such inferences in two sixteenth-century sources of crucial importance in the seventeenth-century British Reformed thought from which Edwards drew. 'Neither in the *Tabula* [of Theodore Beza] nor in [William Perkins's] *A Golden Chaine*,' he writes, 'is there any identification of predestination as a principium of theology, nor is there any attempt to deduce doctrine from the idea of a decree. Both Beza and Perkins assume, moreover,' Muller continues, 'a category of divine permission and the existence, as well, of contingent events and free will in the world.' Muller's final point about Beza and Perkins puts succinctly the most philosophically impoverished aspect of the secondary literature on Edwards. 'There is not even a tendency towards metaphysical determinism,' he insists, 'when we enter the world of seventeenth-century theological debate, it is the purportedly predestinarian Reformed who take up the defense of human free choice and secondary causality against the more deterministic tendencies of Cartesian metaphysics, specifically the occasionalist conclusion'¹⁷⁴ For his part, Edwards dramatically states '... I would observe that creation out of nothing seems to be the only divine operation that [is] absolutely arbitrary, without any kind of use made of any such antecedently fixed method of proceeding as is called a law of nature.'¹⁷⁵ In making the case that God's arbitrary operation is still manifest in the creation he in point of fact holds that it is always going to be coexistent with non-arbitrary operations. Even God's subsequent creative acts within the making of the present world are not purely arbitrary given that 'some use was made of laws of nature before established; such, at least, as the laws of resistance and attraction, or adhesion and *vis inertiae*, that are essential to the very being of matter, for the very solidity of the particles of matter itself consists in them.'¹⁷⁶

Whether Edwards's clear desire to regard 'God's sovereign, arbitrary interposition and influence' on the 'hearts' of the converted as a form

¹⁷³ Lee's modified occasionalism fares better than Crisp's unattenuated occasionalism here. But one must still wonder, with Crisp (77 n.29), why Lee insists on using the term at all after admitting that Edwards 'preserves the relative yet real integrity and permanence of the created order' ('Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 21, 55).

¹⁷⁴ Richard A. Muller, *Post-Reformation Reformed Dogmatics: The Rise and Development of Reformed Orthodoxy, ca. 1520–1725*, Vol. 1, *Prolegomena to Theology*, 2nd edition (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2003), 128–129.

¹⁷⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263; *WJE* 23, 204.

¹⁷⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263; *WJE* 23, 204–205.

of the 'extraordinary' manner of operation superceding natural laws should be regarded as subject to this same stipulation is a point requiring a more delicate touch.¹⁷⁷ He does indeed seem to connect it to a determinate suspension of the laws of nature like the virgin birth and the end of the world. We will have to await our discussion of the perseverance of the saints in Chapter 5 to get into the various means of construing the compossibility of second causes and the kind of infallibility normally associated with the *ordo salutis* in Reformed thought. In the meantime, although it cannot be regarded as an exact correlation, we have Edwards's statement that the original bestowal of a soul into the developing body 'must,' in its intricate arbitrariness, 'be a law of nature that is most peculiar and widely differing from all other laws of nature, and independent of them'¹⁷⁸ That is, it is partly 'natural' and also different enough to give pause in supposing it wholly natural. Another instance of the discourse of arbitrary-natural duality lends further support to the subsuming of conversion into a form of secondary causality. In filling out the 'arbitrariness' of the human mind vis-à-vis the *imago dei*, Edwards emphasizes their operations as 'above such a kind of general laws of matter' and 'so singular, that they are altogether untraceable.'¹⁷⁹ This singularity is magnified in the case of spiritual operations 'by which the minds are most conversant with the Creator.'¹⁸⁰ When Edwards subsequently says that the arbitrariness of these spiritual operations of mind 'are not altogether without use made of means and some connection with antecedents,' it comes with the qualification that the latter are not properly called secondary causes.¹⁸¹ But his meaning here cannot be to deny any co-mingling of arbitrariness with natural operation because it is explicitly affirmed. It seems, therefore, that what may be at issue here in the terminology is less the existence of secondary causes than the proportion of causal power in second causes vs. God's primary causality.

A more precise analysis of the compossibilities of a mostly 'arbitrary' conversion with a more substantive conception of secondary causality than allowed in this statement must await consideration of the correlation of David Brainerd's spiritual autobiography with Edwards's reflec-

¹⁷⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263; *WJE* 23, 211, 210.

¹⁷⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263; *WJE* 23, 209.

¹⁷⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263; *WJE* 23, 207.

¹⁸⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263; *WJE* 23, 207.

¹⁸¹ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263; *WJE* 23, 207.

tions on church membership (the subject of Chapter 6).¹⁸² I nevertheless do hope to have given some good reason to think that it is a considerable over-reaching of the data to suppose that in affirming '[a]rbitrary operation is that to which is owing the existence of the subject of natural operation, the manner, measure and all the circumstances of their existence' Edwards is making the occasionalist point that no being has any power to change itself in any dimension or that God does not have any respect for the structures of the present instantiation of the world.¹⁸³ As we have seen, he directly asserts both that humans have some 'secondary' or dependent form of 'arbitrary' power over themselves and that God is often, even if not always, limited by the form of matter. Rather, he is merely saying that God must and does stand as a first cause behind whatever second causes there are. Indeed he puts the point in a very standard way in the context of the scholastic distinction between God's absolute power (*dei potentia absoluta*) and God's ordained power (*dei potentia ordinata*) noted above. When he says that "[t]is arbitrary operation that fixes, determines and limits the laws of natural operation," it is the traditional point that while God could—and, Edwards says, sometimes does—choose to act against them, most often God freely binds divine power to act in accordance with the regularities in the ordained order.¹⁸⁴ This is routinely regarded as part of God's providence—ordaining the present order wisely and for the manifold benefits of the creatures that require some regularity and order to live meaningfully and rationally within it. In stipulating the various permutations of this composite causality, he even offers a standard definition of secondary causality. Of the 'three ways that those operations which are not absolutely and perfectly arbitrary may approach near to it ... [o]ne is by arbitrary operations being mixed with those that are natural, i.e. when there is something in the operation that is arbitrary and tied to no fixed rule of law, and something else in the operation wherein the laws of nature are made use, and without which the designed effect could not take place.'¹⁸⁵ That Edwards refers to the form of such mixed operation in human willing as 'secondary and dependent

¹⁸² In the earlier and more abbreviated reflection of 'Miscellanies' No. 818., Edwards states that 'the Spirit of God in the heart of a saint acts both as a natural vital principle, and also as a voluntary agent manifesting care of that heart that it is in, lest it should be overcome by temptations, and lest it should fall away' (*WJE* 18, 528).

¹⁸³ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, *WJE* 23, 202.

¹⁸⁴ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, *WJE* 23, 202.

¹⁸⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, *WJE* 23, 203.

arbitrariness' would seem to lend support to such an interpretation.¹⁸⁶ In the final analysis, Edwards does not in any case need the extreme position of occasionalism to make his point against the Arminians. Secondary causality is a much lighter and more wieldy weapon of asserting that the divine will is the first cause.¹⁸⁷ It also does not have the unfortunate consequence of overtly clashing with the highly pervasive and long-standing anti-antinomian discourse in the corpus.

One of the most significant implications of this conception of secondary causality is that the 'logic of virtue' I am developing provides a way to understand Edwards's critique of Arminianism as not in conflict with but dovetailing in most of its joints with his critique of antinomianism.¹⁸⁸ Again, in this two-sided polemic he stands with Puritan forbears among the 'Intellectual Fathers' like Willard who, E. Brooks Holifield notes, regarded as 'the defining aim of his thoughts' 'cutting the thread true' 'the way [that] lyes very narrow between Antinomian and Arminian errors'¹⁸⁹ The next two chapters will bring the combined logic of (i) the substantive virtue the Holy Spirit makes possible

¹⁸⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, *WJE* 23, 203.

¹⁸⁷ McCracken's treatment of Edwards as occasionalist has the virtue of being informed by a very detailed analysis of Malebranche's thought. This allows him a vocabulary for integrating Edwards's strictly metaphysical views (e.g., on the extension of matter) and the more soteriologically oriented views that constitute the usual sources for this debate in the literature. McCracken nevertheless oversimplifies the important theological questions at stake for Edwards in supposing that those who maintained 'so robust a confidence in the sovereignty of the divine will' would not have 'choked on so small a gnat as the replacing of secondary causes by occasional ones?' (McCracken, 318). I hope the complex questions and the subtle gradations of position dealt with in this chapter are sufficient comment to deny that the difference between the two types of causality is so easily swallowed. What does warrant further mentioning is McCracken's consideration of the objection 'may things not depend on some law of nature that operates simultaneously with the effects it produces?' He notes that in *Original Sin* 'Edwards grants that this is the case, but argues (as he had in his youthful 'Notes') that by a *law of nature* we are to understand "nothing but the continued immediate efficiency of God, according to a constitution that he has been pleased to establish."' (McCracken, 338). The inappropriateness of this supposition should now be clear. To say that God's 'immediately efficient' will is what maintains laws of nature as laws of nature does not *ipso facto* deny their stature as proximate causes in which the secondary causes of human activity (e.g., repentance and humiliation) operate. It is equally compatible, we have seen, with an affirmation of God as first cause standing behind all secondary causes. There are, moreover, many gradations of the autonomy of secondary causes that are compatible with a stipulation of God as ultimate first cause.

¹⁸⁸ Situating Edwards more determinately vis-à-vis Deism (see, e.g., Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible*, 14–15) is, thus, incomplete.

¹⁸⁹ E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America*, 65; Holifield cites this passage as coming from *Covenant-Keeping the Way to Blessedness* (Boston: James Glen, 1682), 31.

in the sanctification that assures salvation (*via* the practical syllogism) and (ii) the space Edwards makes for secondary causes of grace to bear on (iii) the minimal degree of freedom he argues is compatible with divine sovereignty and (iv) how regenerate persons maintain and solidify assurance of salvation through purposive activity. Of particular interest in the conceptual links between them will be the rational dignity of the human creature before God as well as the intricate relationship between human consent to God and the intentionality of habit formation. The benefits of church community and the dangers of a lack of it described in the ecclesiastical writings and *Life of Brainerd* (the subject of Chapter 6), will be the central case studies in setting out the awkwardness of the narrow Calvinist view that God efficaciously preserves the saints in salvation (the subject of Chapter 5) for capturing the foundational Edwardsean tenets we have considered. What will emerge is an interpretive stance toward the highly complex and shifting attitudes toward the perseverance of the saints in the Edwardsean corpus, which, while it may not be able to determinately displace all contrary evidence, is too strong to counter with the bald assertion that Edwards remained consistent with all significant points of Synod of Dort 'orthodoxy.' Edwards shows himself to be a kindred spirit with those England divines whom Michael McGiffert describes as having '[f]rom early on ... fully accepted the foundation principles of the covenant of grace but bent them towards moralism.'¹⁹⁰ It therefore would be irresponsible not to explore the commensurate possibility that for Edwards, no less than for some of these English divines, 'apostasy was conceivable.'¹⁹¹ When we do so, the precise status and power of second causes vis-à-vis God's sovereignty as uniquely efficient first cause will be one of the most important philosophical constraints on what Edwards could have held as his mature ethical position.

¹⁹⁰ Michael McGiffert, 'Grace and Works: The Rise and Division of Covenant Divinity in Elizabethan Puritanism,' *Harvard Theological Review* 75, No. 4 (Oct. 1982): 481.

¹⁹¹ McGiffert, 'Grace and Works,' 481.

CHAPTER FOUR

HABITUATION AND THE WILL'S LIMITED FREEDOM

Edwards's Conception of the Will and Reformed Historiography

The heritage of Edwards's treatise on the freedom of the will is always contested, sometimes ironic, and in any case complex. At least one reason it is contested is because, as William Breitenbach has pointed out, the intellectual battles fought between Moderate Calvinists and New Divinity ministers in the nineteenth century were sometimes bloodier than those fought between Calvinists and Arminians more generally.¹ Each Calvinist faction Mark Noll adds '... saw itself as defending orthodoxy against the Arminian threat and accordingly deemed the other's tenets dangerously wrongheaded.'² This protracted contention has ironic outcomes for observers of nineteenth-century American religious thought interested in Edwards. For Edwards was presumed both to advocate a conception of determinism comparable with Calvin's own predestinarianism, and criticized for doing so—all by those claiming his mantle in defense of their particular vision of the nature and destiny of Calvinism.³ All of this took place, of course, despite his own general

¹ William Breitenbach, 'The Consistent Calvinism of the New Divinity Movement,' *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 41 (April 1984): 246–247.

² Breitenbach, 'Consistent Calvinism,' 246.

³ Mark A. Noll, 'The Contested Legacy of Jonathan Edwards in Antebellum Calvinism: Theological Conflict and the Evolution of Thought in America,' *Canadian Review of American Studies* 19 (Summer 1988): 150. One of the most interesting features of the nineteenth-century debate among American Calvinists must indeed be, as Noll proposes, how different some of the combatants were from Edwards on the matter of the will's freedom ('The Contested Legacy,' 153). As Alexander V.G. Allen perceptively observed over a hundred years ago, it was '[f]rom a fear of being understood to deny the freedom of the will, coupled as it was in the popular mind with the sense of responsibility, [that] ... preachers who followed Edwards magnified his meagre conception of freedom, and felt justified in using the Arminian nomenclature.' It was '[i]n this way,' Allen continues, '[that] Edwards' idea of freedom became a bridge of transition to a modern Calvinism in which liberty is conceded in the fuller sense as a power to choose between good and evil' ('The Freedom of the Will,' in *Critical Essays on Jonathan Edwards*, ed. William J. Scheick [Boston: G.K. Hall, 1980], 95).

assertion that he did not regard Calvin as authoritative in all things,⁴ and his particular insistence that '... a providential disposing and determining [of] men's moral actions ... does not in the least infringe the real liberty of mankind'⁵ Extracting Edwards's own views from amidst the interpenetrating commentaries of his conversation partners, his followers, and his subsequent detractors and advocates is also hauntingly complex. For as Noll has noted, the disputants in this debate were shaped by and responded to multiple moral horizons, e.g., 'the honored traditions of the Reformation, the weighty legacy of Puritanism, the domesticated Enlightenment of Scotland and the visionary promise of the American Revolution,'⁶ each with vested interests of their own.

Many studies of Edwards's conception of the will are concerned with its relationship to developments of later eighteenth- or nineteenth-century Calvinist movements.⁷ Having shifted the frame of reference backward to Reformed scholasticism and the response of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century moral philosophers thereto, this chapter seeks to bring a different set of issues into relief. One important difference between the standard historiography of American Calvinism and the alternative historiography explored in the Introduction is that Aristotelianism is not a significant force in the former;⁸ while in the latter

⁴ *WJE* 1, 131.

⁵ *WJE* 1, 405–406.

⁶ Noll, 'The Contested Legacy,' 150.

⁷ Norman Fiering's excellent treatment of the state of the free will/determinism debate Edwards inherited is an important exception. Fiering recognizes that before Hobbes '[d]eterminism ... did not seem to be particularly threatening' (*Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context* [Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1981], 278). 'What ... [Hobbes] did,' Fiering notes, '... was to bring determinism into bad repute, even though a moderate and carefully qualified Aristotelian-Thomist determinism had been majority opinion for centuries.... After Hobbes ... to avow even a traditional determinist point of view was to be suspected of holding an opinion that led inevitably to atheism and materialism' (*ibid.*).

⁸ While Fiering's picture of Aristotelian ethics being largely ruled out of the ethics curriculum by the end of the seventeenth century is generally sound, it de-emphasizes both the extent to which scholastic ideas had been incorporated into Protestant dogmatics itself and the manner in which students of moral philosophy continued to read large encyclopedias wherein scholastic ideas were prominent. John T. Hardwood's discussion of Robert Boyle's reliance upon Johann Heinrich Alsted's *Encyclopaedia* (1630) is instructive in this respect (*The Early Essays and Ethics of Robert Boyle* [Carbondale and Edwardsville, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1991], xxiv–xxx). Howard Hotson's discussion of Alsted's participation in the Synod of Dort, his maintenance of certain Renaissance ideals of perfection through study, and the development of his robust conception of millenarian Calvinism make him a fascinating early seventeenth-century

it is a prominent, if not the preeminent, force. We must be careful not to commit the fallacy of supposing that such use of Aristotelian categories overdetermines the content of Edwards's position. As Richard A. Muller observes about seventeenth-century Reformed use of Aristotle on the question of human willing, 'what is scholastic about the teaching is the basic assumption that the topic of divine willing can be divided into various subcategories, that distinctions can be made corresponding to the divisions, and that these distinctions can be used as part of an argument designed to define and clarify the doctrinal point.'⁹ But nevertheless, bringing the tradition of Christian thought on virtue influenced by Aristotle to bear on Edwards (in conjunction with his concurrent Neoplatonism) makes a positive contribution both to his place in the history of ideas and to the exegesis of his ethics.¹⁰ For when the debate over Edwards's conception of the will's freedom is viewed in terms of Edwards's perceived or impugned Calvinist 'orthodoxy,' it is more difficult to capture the differing importance of high levels of virtue in the Christian life. Not only does Calvin's articulation of the *ordo salutis* imply the possibility of at least a temporary gulf between justification and sanctification,¹¹ when he does allow the use of good works as an 'undergirding and strengthening' of faith, it is only in a manner secondary to the primary assurance of faith itself.¹² It comes, moreover, with some serious caveats about the slippery slope down to justification by works.¹³ Sanctification will grow as the faith given in justification

foil to Edwards (*Johann Heinrich Alsted 1588–1638: Between Renaissance, Reformation and Universal Reform* [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000]).

⁹ Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 29.

¹⁰ John M. Cooper astutely recognizes that despite 'Aristotle the moral philosopher [being] ... very much in vogue these days Aristotle and medieval Aristotelians such as Aquinas are by no means the only important philosophers of the past who regarded the acquisition and constant employment of the virtues as the center both of morality itself and of a correct theory of what morality demands of us. ... [Q]uite a few post-Renaissance moralists, both Christian and secular, shared this much of Aristotle's outlook' ('Some Remarks on Aristotle's Moral Psychology' in *Reason and Emotion: Essays on Ancient Moral Psychology and Ethical Theory* [Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 1999], 237). See also Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 309.

¹¹ Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1960), 785 (III, xi, 1). See also *Institutes* III, xvi, 1; *Institutes* III, iii, 1; *Institutes* III, ii, 8.

¹² Calvin, *Institutes*, III, iii, 18; ed. McNeill, 785.

¹³ While Calvin does recognize good works as the fruits of the calling of the elect (*Institutes*, III, xiv, 18) one cannot overemphasize the extent to which he also warns against taking good works as a primary, rather than a secondary, source of assurance of

deepens; but even the best works remain distortedly flawed.¹⁴ While the fact that some germ of inherent righteousness *via* sanctification is offered to the elect in addition to imputed righteousness *via* justification must not be underestimated, Calvin's suspicion of the practical syllogism does exhibit a force and scope discordant with major trajectories in Edwards's mature thought.

A Kind of Compatibilism

Edwards's earliest 'Miscellanies' entries affirm something of a standard Reformed position on the impotence of human agency. 'Miscellanies' No. 15 concerns the doctrine of irresistible grace. The young Edwards conveys a certain impatience on a set of false alternatives that seem to him to have been generated by this point. The efficaciousness of God's agency ought not be restricted to an either/or—where either full salvation is achieved in every case where grace is disbursed at all or souls that do not enter into full communion with God are, by definition, bereft of all grace. This would indeed seem to limit God from determining in individual cases to what degree grace is to be efficacious. Rather, 'when God assists, he assists to all that he intends to assist to.'¹⁵ An argumentative twist that expands the possibility of human freedom in the concept of diverse ranges of grace begins to appear in the middle range of entries, however. In 'Miscellanies' No. 830, for instance, Edwards is less inclined to show that we have no freedom than he is to show that the necessary relationship between a fixed habit such as 'ill-temper' can itself excuse a person from any particular act of 'ill-temper.' In other words, Edwards is more interested in showing how his view of determinism is still compatible with the kind of freedom requisite of praise and blame. In entry No. 831, the locution

election. Wilhelm Niesel clarifies that 'Calvin felt able to admit that our works may become a sign of our godliness provided that in Christ we have previously gained assurance of salvation He alone is the Author of our salvation, who gives us the certainty of final deliverance' (Wilhelm Niesel, *The Theology of Calvin*, trans. Harold Knight [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956], 179). Whether or to what extent Calvin employed the practical syllogism is something of a debated point among Reformation scholars. I follow Niesel's argument against this suggestion. See also R.T. Kendall, 'The Puritan Modification of Calvin's Theology,' in *John Calvin: His Influence in the Western World*, ed. W. Stanford Reid (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1982), 208–209.

¹⁴ *Institutes*, II, vii, 5; *Institutes*, III, xii, 1; *Institutes*, III, xiv, 9.

¹⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 15, *WJE* 13, 208.

‘creatures capable of act and choice’ begins to appear together with the concept of union with Christ.¹⁶ This locution reappears, for instance, in entry No. 1045, where the acceptance of Christ as Savior seems more an autonomous human response and conditional requirement of subsequently being given Christ as Savior.

The precise nature of these, admittedly, thinly developed composibilities of freedom and necessity must await further expansion when we have greater leisure to integrate Edwards’s conception of the will with other features of his thought (the subject matter of Chapter 6).¹⁷ Here my more narrow purpose is to explore what is behind Edwards’s clear intention in *Freedom of the Will* to affirm such a compossibility.¹⁸ Being careful to stipulate that the self-shaping it makes possible is not so dramatic as to allow agents to bridge the gap between reprobate and regenerate sensibilities by their own efforts (unaided by God),¹⁹ I hope to provide at least a *prima facie* demonstration that Edwards’s conception of freedom allows for some minimal account of moral habituation,²⁰ i.e., the processes where moral agents contribute to the augmen-

¹⁶ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 831, *WJE* 18, 545.

¹⁷ There is a well-developed discussion among Christian philosophers as to the relationship between God’s foreknowledge and human freedom that sometimes engages Edwards as an example. See, for instance, Nelson Pike, ‘Divine Foreknowledge and Voluntary Action,’ *Philosophical Review* 74 (January 1965): 27–46; Alvin Plantinga, ‘On Ockham’s Way Out,’ *Faith and Philosophy* 3 (July 1986): 235–269; George Mavrodes, ‘Is the Past Preventable?’, *Faith and Philosophy* 1 (April 1984): 131–146; Linda Zagzebski, *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1992); and David P. Hunt, ‘Augustine on Theological Fatalism: The Argument of *De Libero Arbitrio* 3.1–4,’ *Medieval Philosophy and Theology* 5 (1996): 1–30.

¹⁸ *WJE* 1, 405–406.

¹⁹ Although Edwards decidedly rejects the substantive conception of freedom espoused by the Cambridge Platonists, their influence on Edwards’s adaptation of the Neoplatonic metaphysics of emanation was nevertheless powerful. For a succinct statement of Cudworth’s conception of free will see Stephen Darwall, *The British Moralists and the Internal ‘Ought’ 1640–1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 140–147.

²⁰ The relevance of Aristotle’s conception of causation is common enough in discussions of earlier Puritans. See, for instance, William K.B. Stoever, *‘A Faire and Easie Way to Heaven’: Covenant Theology and Antinomianism in Early Massachusetts* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1978), 110–111; David D. Hall, *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636–1638: A Documentary History* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1968), 35; and Jon Pahl, *Paradox Lost: Free Will and Political Liberty in American Culture, 1630–1760: New Studies in American Intellectual and Cultural History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 12, 183n13. It has also been raised in connection with Edwards. The only substantive attempt to explicate Edwards’s conception of the will in terms of Aristotle’s account of habituation I have been able to find, however, comes from an unlikely discussion of differing conceptions of agency and moral responsibility in psychiatric

tation or diminution of particular character traits. This will provide a crucial link between the habit of sanctified charity that is a sign of regeneration (*via* the practical syllogism) and the real-life fluctuation of character traits through the constantly changing parameters of social environment and individual personality.

That Edwards does not regard a certain degree of freedom as incompatible with a strong determinism is often enough asserted in the literature.²¹ Its relevance to broad issues of agency or responsibility is some-

methodology (M.E. Grenander, 'The Fourfold Way: Determinism, Moral Responsibility, and Aristotelian Causation,' *Metamedicine* 3 [October]: 383–393). Norman Fiering has recognized that Edwards was aware of the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century discussions of habit (*Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context* [Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1981], 308–313) but emphasizes Edwards's insistence that habituation is not sufficient for Christian moral development ('Benjamin Franklin and the Way to Virtue,' *American Quarterly* 30 [1978]: 220–222). Fiering's *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1981) also appears to be making a case for Edwards' 'Aristotelianism.' But while the privileged place of Aristotle in the ethics curriculum of later seventeenth-century Harvard is impressively documented, closer inspection reveals Fiering's point to be that by the turn of the eighteenth-century Aristotelian ethics had mostly been replaced by 'the new moral philosophy.' Fiering regards it as a 'strange quirk,' moreover, that Edwards attempted to explicate the conception of determinism in terms of probability of action based on habituation predispositions (*Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 308). As I noted in the Introduction, while Sang Hyun Lee and Anri Morimoto draw on the concept of habit in Aristotle and in the Thomistic tradition, it must finally be said that their constructive use of both to articulate a 'dispositional ontology' have more in common with the realism v. idealism debate in modern philosophy than with the more classic usage I see in Edwards's appropriation of Protestant scholasticism. I would not go so far as Fiering to suggest that it involved a 'profound redefinition of the meaning of habit' but he is certainly right to notice that for Ames '[t]hat good which is done without "an honest and good heart" cannot be "pleasing unto God"' (Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 93; Fiering cites Ames, *Cases of Conscience*, II, chap. 8). Allen C. Guelzo's study steps around the edges of the idea of habit in its use of terms like 'temper' and 'nature' (*Edwards on the Will: A Century of American Theological Debate*. [Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989], 81–82), but it does not connect this to gradual process of moral development through imitation of paradigm cases valued within community. In a later essay, however, Guelzo does recognize that habitual exercise made an action more morally praiseworthy rather than less ('From Calvinist Metaphysics to Republican Theory,' 407). Stephen H. Daniel briefly discusses the concept of habit in connection with Edwards's theory of virtue, but is mostly concerned to show how Edwards viewed the latter as stemming from God's prior causality (*The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards: A Study in Divine Semiotics* [Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1994], 173).

²¹ Dewey Hoytenga 'Norman Geisler on Man's Destiny,' *Christian Scholar's Review* 9 (2): 112–116; Bruce Kuklick, *Churchman and Philosophers: from Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1985), 35–36; Guelzo, *Edwards on the Will*, 2–8, 75–77; Gregory P. Rich, 'Jonathan Edwards's View of the Freedom Requisite for Moral

times entertained.²² As far as I know, however, no sustained attempt has been made to show how such a circumscribed freedom might actually work in the practical realm. I will argue that despite the degree of determinism he concurrently held, his limited conception of freedom is nevertheless sufficient to give content to the central capacity Aristotle grants adult agents to govern their own course of self-cultivation.²³ As a historical support for suggesting Edwards held a position of this kind, I will intermittently be examining the views of Nicolas Malebranche on moral freedom, habits and grace.²⁴ I believe both Malebranche and Edwards held that habit of sanctified charity, while limited to the regenerate through an infusion of grace, is nevertheless like any other habit in requiring the continual actualization of human freedom. Showing that Edwards regards agents as able to partially influence their dispositions makes it more plausible to suppose that his ethics retained assumptions from the diverse trajectories of 'Christian Aristotelianism' despite Calvinist scruples against moral freedom, high degrees of virtue, and/or perfectionistic notions of community.

Agency,' in *Religion and Philosophy in the United States of America*, ed. Peter Freese (Essen [Germany]: Verlag die Blaue Eule, 1987), 647; Guelzo, 'From Calvinist Metaphysics to Republican Theory,' 406; Daniel, *The Philosophy of Jonathan Edwards*, 152; Hugh J. McCann, 'Edwards on Free Will,' in *Jonathan Edwards Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003), 42; Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 145–146; idem, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought and Its British Context*, 305. Fiering's latter treatment has the unique virtue of further specifying how this position is indicative of many voluntarists in the Augustinian tradition (*Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 268–271).

²² See for instance, William Breitenbach, 'Unregenerate Doings: Selfless and Selfishness in New Divinity Theology,' *American Quarterly* 34 (Winter): 482–484; idem, 'Consistent Calvinism,' 256–258; Annlouise Keating, 'The Implications of Edwards' Theory of the Will on Ahab's Pursuit of Moby Dick,' *English Language Notes* 28 (March): 28–35; and Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 20.

²³ This must be attended with substantial qualifications: the self-shaping it makes possible is never so dramatic as to allow agents to bridge the gap between reprobate and regenerate sensibilities unaided by God.

²⁴ With Norman Fiering and George Marsden, I believe it makes a great deal of sense to suppose Edwards read Malebranche (Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 43; George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], 525/41).

The Arminian Position Defined

Edwards's great treatise on the will is the rebuttal of the moral psychology of 'Arminianism.'²⁵ The type of freedom the Arminians thought was necessary for an intelligible Christian ethics has three closely related features: (i) the freedom of contingency, (ii) the freedom of self-determination, and (iii) the freedom of indifference. Unless each condition could be satisfied, they argued, human beings could not be said to possess sufficient freedom to be blamed for their vice or praised for their virtue. Since Edwards's presentation of these three species of freedom is almost never separate from his critique of them, I treat the *pro* and *con* cases together. In the next section, we will then be able to plumb this negative account for Edwards's own positive conception of the will's freedom.

The guiding principle behind the Arminian insistence on the freedom of contingency is that if an agent's present inclinations are determined or necessitated by past causes (including, but not exclusive to, the agent's past inclinations) then the kind of freedom requisite of moral praise and blame does not obtain. This principle would correspond to contemporary insights on the nature of addiction as well as to what Aristotle calls natural 'brutishness' or being 'morbid' (e.g., excessive fear or insanity).²⁶ Contrary to Edwards's conception of moral necessity, the Arminians held habits to exert a force on present inclination and choice insufficient to cause any specific act or inclination in the future, and, *a fortiori*, insufficient to render the relationship between cause (present habit) and effect (future volition) necessary. Edwards's critique of this position was delivered in high rhetorical fashion: '[t]o say, two and two makes nine; or, that a child begat his father, solves no difficulty'²⁷ While the *reductio* here may not be entirely fair,²⁸ the point remains that Edwards's conception of virtue and vice requires a

²⁵ I recognize the general validity of Guelzo's point that commentators on *Freedom of the Will* have, to the detriment of the understanding of the text, failed to attend to the distinctive positions of the three individual Arminians Edwards is attacking (*Edwards on the Will*, 54). The finer points of the differences between them are, nevertheless, beyond the scope of my particular concerns here.

²⁶ *Nicomachean Ethics* 1148b15–1149a12.

²⁷ *WJE* I, 414. The animus of Edwards's derision here is against the conclusion that postlapsarian humanity would then be affected in a less than necessary way by the sin of the first parents.

²⁸ The Arminians did not deny that present habits have *any* effect on future volitions, just that their force should be conceived as being so prominent as to constitute necessity

substantial force of cause and effect with regard to future volitions in the context of fixed habits. The self is a concatenation of habits, drives (e.g., self-love and conscience) and instincts (e.g., pity) which arise out of the agent's past experiences and evolve in the ever-changing stream of responses to sense and cognitive data. In contrast to the Arminians, the mainstay of Edwards's conception of the self is the view that the will is not an independent power or faculty of volition functioning alongside the intellectual or appetitive faculties.²⁹ Rather, it is merely a description of the human person in the act of choosing, desiring, inclining or preferring.³⁰ For Edwards, '... an appearing most agreeable or pleasing to the mind, and the mind's preferring and choosing, seem hardly to be properly and perfectly distinct.'³¹ The will is continuously moving (in some fashion) in the direction of its greatest desire in each successive movement of experience. At one juncture in his *Treatise on Ethics*, Malebranche puts such a view in terms of love: 'our will or, that is, the natural and necessary movement of our love.'³² '[W]e must know,' he notes in a different place, 'that when two or several goods are present in the mind at the same time, and it is deciding about them, it never fails to choose the one which in that moment seems better to it...' ³³ It is impossible, Edwards commensurately argues, for the will to 'choose' a weaker desire or motive because '... the will's beginning to act is the very same thing as its beginning to choose or prefer.'³⁴ All volitions are thus the 'child' of the entire stream of volitions that came before it *qua* 'father.' From as early as 'Miscellanies' No. 51, Edwards regarded the notion that one type of volition could arise 'perfectly by chance' without connection to previous volitions 'perfect nonsense.'³⁵ There is no such thing as freedom of contingency in his view nor did the common sense view of human agency require it.

(as opposed to contingency). A position like this is implied in Edwards's interpretation of Daniel Whitby (1628–1726) (*WJE* 1, 297).

²⁹ For an informative treatment of the relationship between seventeenth-century Anglo-American moral philosophy and scholastic 'faculty psychology,' see Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard*, 63–146.

³⁰ Guelzo, *Edwards on the Will*, 41.

³¹ *WJE* 1, 144.

³² Nicolas Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics* (1684), translation with an introduction by Craig Walton (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1993), 160.

³³ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, ed. Walton, 89.

³⁴ *WJE* 1, 197; see also *WJE* 1, 143.

³⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 51, *WJE* 13, 228–229.

The guiding principle behind the Arminian insistence on the freedom of indifference is very similar to that behind the freedom of contingency. Whereas freedom of contingency focuses on the limited freedom related to the *connection* of present inclination to past inclination, freedom of indifference focuses on the *content* of that connection. In other words, under the Arminian program, if because of past experience an agent exhibited a substantial preference for one type of volitional response to a sense or cognitive datum, then the kind of freedom requisite for moral praise and blame would not obtain. Any predisposition toward a possible course of action or state of character detracts from the freedom to choose it as opposed to others from the full array of possibilities. Perfect freedom issues out of perfect equilibrium or indifference.

This type of freedom is invalid under Edwards's baseline stipulation that the will is continually inclining: '... in a manner self-evident ... there can be no act of will, choice or preference of the mind, without some motive or inducement, something in the mind's view, which it aims at, seeks, inclines to, and goes after'³⁶ '[P]reference and equilibrium,' Edwards insists, 'never coexist'³⁷ An abundance of detailed examples are consequently offered that underscore the volitional activity lying beneath the surface of the seeming indifference evident in ordinary human behavior. He often has recourse, for example, to a chess board scenario in which an agent seemingly exercising the freedom of indifference in making a 'random' move can be shown upon closer inspection to exhibit definite preferences.³⁸ Even if the agent's final selection between two options can be said to be indifferent, Edwards would argue that the preceding choice to choose randomly is itself generated by a prior and 'interested' inclination. Thus, even in cases where an indifference with regard to objects obtains, strictly speaking, an indifference with regard to actions does not.³⁹ Even if it is only the minutest degree beyond a state of equipoise, even if what tips the scale one way or the other may only be a random impression, something makes one choice stand out from all possible others as preferable. If ever a choice may be said to be undertaken altogether randomly Edwards

³⁶ *WJE* 1, 238; see also *WJE* 1, 231–232.

³⁷ *WJE* 1, 424.

³⁸ *WJE* 1, 198–200. A similar point is made with regard to the choice between two seemingly identical eggs (*WJE* 1, 202, 198).

³⁹ *WJE* 1, 200–201.

would not regard it as a properly human act of volition.⁴⁰ More substantively, given that his view of virtue is one of affectionate regard for the neighbor, he also believes that indifference not only has no connection with virtue but that it positively pertains to vice. To be indifferent about helping someone under duress, for example, is a species of selfishness or callousness. To be indifferent about *harming* one's neighbor, in the sense of not feeling a disinclination to do so, is for Edwards an absence of virtue akin to a substantive vice like malice.⁴¹

The locus of freedom *qua* self-determination is the sovereign choice exercised by the will over what moves it, or, perhaps more accurately, over how it moves itself. Unless agents may be said to possess sufficient freedom of thought and action to determine the course of their own activity, this line of Arminian argumentation runs, then the kind of freedom requisite for moral praise and blame does not obtain.⁴² The freedom of self-determination wanted by at least some Arminians was, thus, closely related to the other two types of freedom we have considered. Prior inclinations and motives were seen as forces of constraint, i.e., antithetical to freedom. Against the predestinarian system of the Calvinists, the common sense idea that people cannot be blamed for what they had no choice about was invoked: if human beings are really *non posse non peccare* except through God's help, then if God does not help them, God becomes either unjust or cruel in damning them (perhaps even the author of sin).⁴³

Edwards's presentation of this position comes in two different versions—a stronger and a weaker version—and the difference is important. In the first version, the agent's powers of self-determination would be limited to choosing from among the various motives that are imposing themselves on the will for attention and 'activation.'⁴⁴ In the second version, the agent's powers of self-determination are not limited to motives presenting themselves to the will, but rather, the agent can will to have whatever motives she wishes.⁴⁵ In this latter scenario, the agent's

⁴⁰ It would be more akin to altered states of consciousness like dreaming, hypnosis or dementia. This is a view shared by Aquinas (Ralph McInerny, 'Ethics,' in *The Cambridge Companion to Aquinas*, ed. Norman Kretzmann and Eleonore Stump [New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1993], 197).

⁴¹ *WJE* 1, 322.

⁴² *WJE* 1, 343.

⁴³ Edwards rejects this outcome vociferously on several occasions (*WJE* 1, 397–414; *WJE* 3, 380–388).

⁴⁴ *WJE* 1, 233.

⁴⁵ *WJE* 1, 222, 233.

imagination alone would be the limit (presumably one cannot want a good one cannot imagine). The issue, in either case, is not whether the will feels any 'pressure' from any of the various inclinations, impulses and instincts to which it responds (most Arminians would grant this); but rather, whether the will has the requisite power over what moves it to be blamed or praised for being so moved. Edwards's critique of this point of the Arminian program can be captured by two primary images of self-determinative freedom: one temporal, one spatial. The temporal image seems more compatible with the weaker version of self-determining freedom. The spatial image seems more compatible with the stronger version of self-determining freedom.

In the temporal image, the will is thought to possess a power of deliberation somehow apart from the immediate flow of consciousness. The will, thus conceived, has 'time' to take an inventory of the various motives making claims on it and to 'choose' the one by which it 'wishes' to be acted upon. Edwards applies a *reductio ad absurdum* to this formulation of the freedom of self-determination: '[h]ere is no way to do in this case, but only to recur to the old absurdity, of one determination before another, and the cause of it; and another before that, determining that; and so on *in infinitum*.'⁴⁶ The absurdity arises in that if any subsequent choices of motive are to be 'free' then they must be brought about by a chain of choices the first of which is free; and if Edwards's arguments against the freedom of indifference and freedom of contingency are granted, then no such 'first free act of the will' can obtain.⁴⁷ A 'first free act' at any arbitrary moment in the flow of consciousness, which could then be said to be the origin of a subsequent chain of free acts, would be a self-ordained and self-determined *fiat* of pure freedom creating its own subsequent freedom.⁴⁸ In a very illustrative example, Edwards suggests that it would be like a fantastical creature who could give birth not only to itself but to the parents that would subsequently conceive and give birth to it.⁴⁹ The will, in Edwards's account, can never extract itself from its present motives to create a subsequent freedom from future motives.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ *WJE* 1, 223; italics original.

⁴⁷ *WJE* 1, 193.

⁴⁸ *WJE* 1, 172.

⁴⁹ *WJE* 1, 345–346.

⁵⁰ Never made explicit in Edwards's counter-argument on this point is the suggestion that the saving grace that deactivates original sin is just such a *fiat*, albeit exercised by God.

The spatial image of self-determinative freedom suggests that despite the ‘inclinal’ impingement of the various instincts, impulses, motives and habits, the will nevertheless retains a ‘space’ separate or exempt from this impingement. However pressed upon with preexistent inclinations, etc., the will occupies a sovereign or sacrosanct space and exercises a autonomous power potentially sufficient to counteract even the strongest among them.⁵¹ Edwards’s contrasting view here is that the will has no separate existence or operation apart from the ever-changing stream of ‘immediate’ volitions, no sovereign space exempt from the push and pull of the appetites or instincts of the ‘irrational’ part of the self.⁵² For Edwards, the intellect cannot conceive of a possibility without the will immediately having an attraction or aversion toward it. Nor can the will choose the motive it will subsequently act upon without peremptorily being affected either by it or another motive. ‘... [H]ow,’ as Allen Guelzo queries, ‘can the will struggle against what it is by definition?’⁵³ In this fashion, the ‘... Arminian notion of liberty of the will, consisting in the will’s self-determination, is repugnant to itself, and shuts itself wholly out of the world.’⁵⁴ Edwards clearly means to eschew then the self-sovereignty implied in the intellectualist maxim ‘that the will always follows the last dictate of the understanding.’⁵⁵ Implicit in the latter model is the supposition that though the will must respond to the understanding or intellect, the intellect is an autonomous first line of reception in the agent’s encounter with reality. Edwards objected both to the autonomy of the intellect and to its status as a first line of reception.⁵⁶ While he certainly recognized that there is such a thing as intellection, understanding, reason, etc., Edwards’s conceptions of the intellect and will have a different relation. To illustrate this, he pointed to cases where the ingrained habits of the will would preclude a person from making use of what the intellect per-

⁵¹ *WJE* 1, 233; see also *WJE* 1, 227.

⁵² *WJE* 1, 209.

⁵³ Guelzo, *Edwards on the Will*, 47.

⁵⁴ *WJE* 1, 174.

⁵⁵ *WJE* 1, 148. Fiering notes that the Thomist-Intellectualist conception of the will was the most common position among Protestants as well as Catholics in the currents of moral philosophy known about at Harvard in the seventeenth century (*Jonathan Edwards’s Moral Thought*, 265–268). See e.g., Peter van Mastricht, ‘De Redimendorum Regeneratione,’ in *Theoretico-Practica Theologia, Qua, per singula capita Theologica, pars exegetica, dogmatica, elenchtica & practica, perpetua successione conjugantur* (Trajecti ad Rhenum & Amstelodami, 1715), 662.

⁵⁶ *WJE* 1, 223.

ceives and/or understands.⁵⁷ Still distinct in its operation from the will, if the conclusions of the intellect are to effect any inclination, they must first be presented to the will with all the other impressions, drives, and instincts confronting it; and even when they 'go through' the will, the conclusions of the intellect do not necessarily influence it.⁵⁸

Edwardsean Freedom as Limited Dispositional Enhancement in the Future

We are now in a position to extract what can be determined of Edwards's own views from his criticism of the various features of the Arminian program. Although some of his late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century interpreters suspected it was illusory given the polemical power of his negative logic, and while it is certainly minimalist, Edwards does indeed have a positive conception of the will's freedom.⁵⁹ A good place to begin drawing it out is with regard to his distinction between 'moral necessity' and 'natural necessity.' The latter concept refers to '... such necessity as men are under through the force of natural causes.'⁶⁰ Moral necessity, in contrast, embodies Edwards's formulation that the will is unable to will other than it is presently willing. Instead of certain kinds of volitions being 'naturally' impossible for the agent *qua* human, e.g., the volition to fly by flapping one's arms, we have the notion that certain volitions are morally impossible for the agent *qua* individual. The distinction is roughly analogous to the classic distinction between the liberty of indifference and the liberty of spontaneity. As Anthony Kenny puts it, '... the fact that we can do what we want does not mean that we can want what we want: we may be free to do what we will, and yet not free to will what we will.'⁶¹ Moral necessity applies to the limitations on what any given person can 'will to will.' Calling Arminians to task for the imprecision of their vocabulary, Edwards rejects that aspect of the 'vulgar' sense of neces-

⁵⁷ *WJE* 1, 221. Edwards also objects to the presumption that if God were to enlighten the understanding, people could achieve full moral goodness through their own efforts (*WJE* 1, 220).

⁵⁸ *WJE* 1, 148.

⁵⁹ Guelzo notes that '... the most persistent criticism he would sustain ... was that his idea of necessity from moral causes was simply a spiritual abstraction (Guelzo, *Edwards on the Will*, p. 77). See also Guelzo, 'From Calvinist Metaphysics to Republican Theory,' 409–411.

⁶⁰ *WJE* 1, 156.

⁶¹ Anthony Kenny, *Will, Freedom and Power* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1976), 147.

sity pertaining to the supposedly irresistible force of a given person's habit or 'nature.' 'It can't be truly said, according to the ordinary use of language,' Edwards insists, 'that a malicious man, let him be never so malicious, can't hold his hand from striking [I]n these things to ascribe a nonperformance to the want of power or ability, is not just; because the thing wanting is not a being *able*, but a being *willing*.'⁶² Habits are not subject to a metaphysical certainty that in the nature of things cannot be otherwise, but to a necessity *relative* to the ordinarily tight cause and effect relationship between past experiences, past habits and present inclinations. For one thing, different acts may be irresistible or 'unendeavorable' to different people. The issue of necessity's scope also arises with respect to circumstance. What an agent cannot resist or endeavor in one context he or she might well be able to resist or endeavor under an alternate set of conditions. Finally, as we will soon have occasion to notice, not all acts deemed necessarily impossible in the present will retain their irresistibility or 'unendeavorability' in the future. Consequently, natural freedom, the kind of freedom attributable to every 'pure' possibility of human action not precluded by absolute or metaphysical necessity, remains compatible with moral necessity.⁶³ A person is free who can spontaneously act as he or she pleases, and this is not taken away by the self-replicating power of strong habits.⁶⁴

Moving our attention from the abstract level to the practical level to support this line of thought, we now hasten to proceed to Edwards's efforts to make room for the kind of self-regulated moral change that lies at the heart of the habituation motif in Aristotelian ethics. For many of Edwards's objectors, who tended to resonate with one or another Enlightenment conception of autonomy, the equal ability to choose between two live options was intrinsic both to common sense intuitions about human freedom and the responsibility central to any intelligible Christian ethics.⁶⁵ He must explain, then, how in his model of the will's

⁶² *WJE* 1, 162; italics original.

⁶³ *WJE* 1, 308, 364, 405–406.

⁶⁴ *WJE* 1, 358–359. See also Fiering, *Edwards's Moral Thought*, 313–314. Regarding the ability to act spontaneously not being taken away by the self-replicating power of strong habits, see Guelzo, *Edwards on the Will*, 51.

⁶⁵ Fiering, *Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought*, 312. According to Guelzo, James Dana did not regard any such agency indicative of true freedom unless the counter-volitional response was a 'real choice' (Guelzo, 'From Calvinist Metaphysics to Republican Liberty,' 410). Among modern interpreters of Edwards, Rich and Murphy seems to presume this conception of moral agency (Rich, 'Jonathan Edwards's View of the Freedom Requisite for Moral Agency,' 653; Arthur E. Murphy, 'Jonathan Edwards on Free Will

freedom human beings operating under a fixed habit (either of vice or virtue) still have freedom of choice and action in the sense of 'doing as they please.' One means he devises is an invocation of the analogy between God's virtuous agency and the agency of virtuous human beings. Drawing on the classic theological discussion about the relationship between divine omnibenevolence and omnipotence,⁶⁶ Edwards challenges his opponents to deny '... that those that are called God's acts of righteousness, holiness and faithfulness, are truly and properly God's *acts*, and [that] God is really a holy *agent* in them ...' without consequently denying that 'God necessarily acts justly and faithfully, and that it is impossible for him to act unrighteously and unholily.'⁶⁷ His basic argument is this: because the very concept of virtue implies a desire to be and do good, to insist that God necessarily acts virtuously does not abrogate the continued voluntariness of divine acts. It is incompatible with the concept of moral perfection to say that God *would* ever act contrary to what might be called ultimate goodness; but it is not incompatible with the concept of moral perfection to say that God *could* do so. As Linda Zagzebski points out, '[t]here is nothing outside of God ... that is logically or temporally or causally prior to himself;' accordingly, '[t]o say that the divine motives determine what God will do, given any circumstance, is not to say that God is unfree.'⁶⁸ Interestingly, Theophilus Gale, who also distinguishes between natural and moral freedom, regards as free *only* those whose wills are determined to virtue by the gifts of God.⁶⁹ But even if freedom and benevolence are compatible in the contexts of the divine perfections, and even if becoming virtuous is for Edwards *qua* Neoplatonist becoming godlike in some sense,⁷⁰ the question still arises whether the analogy

and Moral Agency,' *Philosophical Review*, Vol. LXVIII [1959]: 198–202). One need not subscribe to its underlying line of argumentation to appreciate the ingenuity of Hugh G. McCann's specification of a conception of moral agency that does not presume the freedom to choose contrastive alternatives (Hugh G. McCann, 'Divine Sovereignty and the Freedom of the Will,' *Faith and Philosophy* 12, no. 4 [Oct. 1995]: 595–596).

⁶⁶ *WJE* 1, 277–295, 375–396. For a helpful review of this discussion as it pertains to ethics, see Zagzebski, 'Perfect Goodness and Divine Motivation Theory,' in *Midwest Series in Philosophy*, Vol. 21, *Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Peter A. French, Theodore E. Mehling, and Howard K. Wettstein (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), 296–309.

⁶⁷ *WJE* 1, 349; italics original.

⁶⁸ Zagzebski, 'Perfect Goodness,' 301.

⁶⁹ Theophilus Gale, *Court of the Gentiles: ... Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie* (London: By J. Macock, for Thomas Cockeril, 1677), 76.

⁷⁰ This aspect of Edwards's thought will be discussed in Chapter 6.

can be transferred to human beings' imperfect volition. Is the freedom to act contrary to the actions indicative of an established disposition merely what Kant would call a noumenal reality? Or does it represents a phenomenological reality as well? The burden of proof remains on Edwards to demonstrate that even if the good person possesses character traits substantially disposing him or her toward the good, he or she nevertheless operates under a moral necessity to act virtuously distinct from acting under coercion.⁷¹ The latter would invalidate the freedom requisite for moral praise and blame given even the strong version of moral necessity Edwards is willing to countenance.

In order to appreciate Edwards's response to this challenge, it is necessary to recognize that while the will's instantaneously changing nature does preclude there being more than one proper volition in any given instant of experience (because there can be only one strongest motive at a time), it does not preclude any more primal contrariness of desires, instincts, intuitions, and motives, and so forth. Such a contrariness is not merely a 'felt' conflict between the inclinational 'surge' representing the strongest motive, that is, what the will may be said to choose in that instant of experience, and other contrary impulses.⁷² Given even this 'immediate' conception of the will and the consequent impossibility of conflict between the strongest motive proper and other inclinations, Edwards fully recognizes the psychic reality of what might be called 'countervolitional' impulses or desires, that is, prevolitional impulses or desires that run counter to the inclination of the will proper.⁷³ He gives us a hint of this, for instance, in his reflections on Locke's point that the exercise of the will is often confused with mere desire.⁷⁴ With this contrariety of levels of volitional activity as a basis—one the level of the will 'proper' expressing the sum total of an agents inclinations, the other the prevolitional level before which 'readings' indicating the latter are instantaneously taken—it is possible to begin to build an account of moral freedom that is impervious to his own criticism of the Arminian insistence that either virtue must be available to all through 'sincere endeavor' or blame must be withheld from those who 'sincerely endeavor-

⁷¹ *WJE* 1, 377.

⁷² James Wetzel's treatment of the problem of the 'two wills' is highly instructive here (*Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* [New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 126–197).

⁷³ *WJE* 1, 308.

⁷⁴ *WJE* 1, 140; John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, 4th edition, ed. Peter H. Nidditch [Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975], 250).

ored' to achieve it but failed. Edwards writes that 'the vulgar,' in a fashion reminiscent of Arminian caricatures of predestination, '... go away with that notion, that men may truly will and wish and strive that it may be otherwise; but that invincible necessity stands in the way.'⁷⁵ Consistent with the previous discussion of prevolitional desires, he grants that '[a] drunkard, who continues in his drunkenness, being under the power of a love, and violent appetite to strong drink, and without any love to virtue ... may in a sort "desire" the virtue of temperance'⁷⁶ Call this an indirect desire.⁷⁷ The gradual weakening of sinful habits is accomplished through a gradual redirecting of the prevolitional store of impulses, the sum total of which subsequently makes up the inclinational content of the will proper. Prevolutional inclinations in the present (indirect desires) affect properly volitional inclinations in the future by gradually weakening the force of habit.

Habits take their fixedness from the manner in which the strongest motives, built as they are on a past preponderance or pattern of stimulus/response pairings, replicate themselves in future prevolitional 'systems.' But as the instantaneous 'reading' that determines the strongest motive constitutive of the will must judge the inclinational content of the sum total of prevolitional desires, human agents are still free to 'stack the deck,' if you will, against the inclinational balance of the habit-dominated will proper. An example of this is given by Malebranche in his *Treatise on Virtue*:

... a miser may even act contrary to the miserliness which dominates him. For a miser may also be an ambitious man. Presupposing this much, if his passion for riches is not excited, and the one of ambition is excited; or if his miserliness is less excited than his ambition in some proportion reciprocal to the strength of the two passions, then it is certain that the miser will do an act of generosity if in that moment he decides to act (and such a decision is certainly in his power) to.... From this it is evident that for reasons of self-love, the sinner is able to abstain from following a

⁷⁵ *WJE* 1, 354; italics original.

⁷⁶ *WJE* 1, 313.

⁷⁷ I use this term along the same lines as a 'woulding,' a term Edwards used in the *Religious Affections* (*WJE* 2, 99, 448). John E. Smith notes that it refers to '... very weak inclinations which do not represent genuine convictions and do not issue in action ... as if a man were always to say that he "would" believe or perform but never actually does' ('Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 2, 99n2). Smith does not note that this term was also used by John Preston (*The Position of John Preston ... Concerning the Irresistibility of Converting Grace* [London, 1654], 5–6, quoted in John von Rohr, *The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* [Athens, Oh.: Scholars Press, 1986], 145).

particular movement of his passions which otherwise would be likely to determine him, if he can only awaken some contrary passions and, until they are awakened, suspend the consent of his will to the former ones.⁷⁸

By adding to the quantity and quality of contrary prevolitional desires and impulses, the agent can methodically change the course of the sum total of reactions to stimuli in such a way that when subsequent 'readings' are taken, present (properly volitional) inclinations give way to new and different (properly volitional) inclinations in the future. Accordingly, although it is not a (i) discrete effect of the will (ii) following on the sovereign self's privilege of deliberation (iii) free from the push and pull of new inclinations (iv) commonly issuing forth in an act, Edwards still recognizes freedom of choice.⁷⁹ It can only show itself in the subtle alteration of the ever-changing face of an agent's prevolitional inclinations; but it is there.

There is an important difference between Malebranche and Edwards here which it is instructive for us to take up. Immediately prior to distinguishing the 'feeling' of connection to God from the 'delight necessary in order to counterbalance the continuous efforts of our concupiscence,' Malebranche states that he agrees with the church's teaching that there is some natural 'light,' e.g., of conscience, which all may consult for some apprehension of the divine order.⁸⁰ At points, Malebranche does emphasize the manner in which this 'natural light,' if only in extremely exceptional people, could be developed in such a way that would give them at least a footing in the habitual love of God's order. He also emphasizes that 'supposing the aids of grace, every man can be made just,' by which he means not that divine omnipotence can change any person's heart and habits, but that given certain assistance, all persons have the wherewithal within their human nature, to potentially achieve the justifying habit of charity.⁸¹ Edwards, for his part, must dissent from both because of his unflinching adherence to a two-tiered Reformed metaphysics of reprobate and regenerate. But Malebranche doubles back in the passage cited above, in a move that I regard as more central to the position of the work as a whole, to return to a more Edwardsean supposition that a gracious transformation of the what the will can want is needed to bridge the gap between sin and sal-

⁷⁸ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 70.

⁷⁹ *WJE* 1, 158–159.

⁸⁰ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 57.

⁸¹ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 72.

vation. Malebranche ends the paragraph in which this passage occurs by noting that the example of the miser 'does not suffice to make it clear that anyone who sins can refrain from sinning; that the sinner can rid himself of his evil habits and that the just man can lose his charity.'⁸²

Let us call the freedom that remains in Edwards's account when the fullest moral necessity is granted the *freedom of limited dispositional enhancement in the future* (FOLD_f). We may say that Edwards's account of moral agency embodies a capacity recognizable as *freedom* because of the significant difference in content between the present inclination that one's inclinations be other than they are in the present, and the inclination that one's inclinations (at some future point in time) be other than they are in the present.⁸³ Consequently, what freedom obtains in Edwards's account applies only to the *future*. Freedom of the will in the present is impossible for reasons already discussed. But freedom of the will with regard to future volition, not representing a 'true' volition or proper 'strongest motive,' remains intelligible and can be constructed on the basis of the contrariness of motive on the more primal, prevolitional level. Dispositions represent patterns built up in the will's continuous reaction to the various facts and possibilities running past the mind's eye, namely, delight or aversion.⁸⁴ The various receptors of the soul—the senses, impulses, intellect, and appetites—provide what might be called the data to which the will directs its inclining or averting response; and habits exert a self-replicating force on this process. Instantaneous 'willing' cannot violate established habits; but they can still affirm alternatives to the always-solidifying volitional patterns that constitute the choices of the will proper. Thereby, over a course of continued prevolitional exertion, the will can alter the dispositional patterns that will motivate the agent's volitions and actions in the future by proliferating prevolitions contrary to preexistent habits in the present. Because what one is altering when one applies this freedom is not one's actual

⁸² Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 70.

⁸³ *WJE* 1, 161. The will is not free in the present because it is determined by past habits. A modern version of this argument is nicely summarized by McCann ('Divine Sovereignty and the Freedom of the Will,' 591).

⁸⁴ Such occasions of comparison or choice are, Edwards suggests, the core human experience of consciousness. Edwards shares this feature of his model of the self with Augustine (*City of God* 14.6). Indeed, Edwards speculates, the only way human beings are aware of the passing of time is the perception of the will's inclinations changing (*WJE* 1, 200).

dispositions, but the foundation of one's future dispositions it nevertheless seems better to call this power *dispositional enhancement* rather than something more substantive like dispositional creation or destruction.⁸⁵ Finally, the force of the qualifier *limited* is meant to capture Edwards's general resonance with the Reformed insistence that it is impossible for human agents to bridge the gap from reprobate to regenerate through their own efforts.⁸⁶

Habit and Freedom in Edwards and Aristotle

An objection arises at this juncture. For if I have shown in even a preliminary fashion that Edwards's conception of freedom is captured in the FOLD_f, the consequent inference that, based on this, Edwards is appropriately included within the orbit of Aristotelian ethics can be separately challenged. It might still be objected, for example, that the FOLD_f is insufficient to serve as a foundation for a conception of moral development consonant with Aristotle's. In the next section I will respond to this objection by arguing that Edwards's conception of freedom is indeed sufficient to give content to the central capacity Aristotle grants adult agents to partially govern their own course of self-cultivation. Here I must bring the two thinkers close enough together to make such a comparison plausible.

Admittedly, bringing Aristotelian and Edwardsean moral development together is no easy task. First of all, as Sarah Broadie points out, Aristotle 'does not ... make clear... *how* by engaging in the behavior we come to develop the virtuous disposition expressed by that sort of behaviour.'⁸⁷ Nor does he '... seem to be bothered,' T.H. Irwin reminds us, 'by questions about whether and when we are "really

⁸⁵ One's actual dispositions remain the same in the present despite the maximum contrary prevolitional pressure an agent could apply. The exercise of the FOLD_f might eventually create some dispositions and destroy others, but this would be the result of long-term effort and practice.

⁸⁶ Whereas for Edwards it is only when natural freedom acts on the results of saving grace that progress in true or sanctified virtue (preeminently, charity) can take place, the Arminian would hope to clarify conditions under which it would be possible for an unvirtuous person to use and build on the 'indirect' desire to possess charity until (eventually) it could be developed fully.

⁸⁷ Sara Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1991), 72; italics original.

free.”⁸⁸ Moreover, because Aristotle's method of ‘saving appearances’ seeks to place before us a realistic picture of an actually good person and then deduce from that an account of what goodness is, most of his discussion is dedicated to examples of the fully virtuous person and not those between adult moral agency and full virtue.⁸⁹ I must therefore construct Aristotle's particular account of how freedom manifests itself in moral development out of inferences from his more general insistence that a person moves from middling to full virtue by engaging in the practices of already good people under the long-term auspices of familial and societal role models.

Fortunately, formal similarities between the two thinkers make the comparison requisite to answering this objection something more than placing apples next to oranges. For among other things, Edwards inherited the conception of dispositions taking root in a complex network of explicit training and the reinforcement of interpersonal relationships from the long virtue tradition in Christian ethics of which Protestant scholasticism is one expression. Broadie's affirmation that for Aristotle ‘[t]he more settled a person's character, the more it seems to be his nature, and the less the ethical difference between options open to him as voluntary agent’ applies just as readily to Edwards.⁹⁰ Given this correspondence, it is not surprising that the issue of determinism has arisen for the interpreters of Aristotle even though he does not share the Christian heritage that makes freedom of the will the central problem it is for Edwards.⁹¹ At least there must be a limit on what Aristotle would recognize as freedom *in actu* even if there is no theoretical limit. I think it makes sense to say that such a limit would be something between the strength of the freedom of indifference and the strength of the freedom of spontaneity.⁹² So far as I know, no one denies that

⁸⁸ T.H. Irwin, ‘Reason and Responsibility in Aristotle,’ *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, ed. Amelie O. Rorty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1980), 117.

⁸⁹ See Martha C. Nussbaum, *Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1986), 240–263. For an alternative reading of Aristotle's method in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, see John M. Cooper, ‘Aristotle on the Authority of “Appearances,”’ *Reason and Emotion*, 281–291.

⁹⁰ Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, 160; see also Francis Sparshott, *Taking Life Seriously: A Study of the Argument of the Nicomachean Ethics* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1994), 80.

⁹¹ Some commentators suggest that Aristotle's position resonates with certain forms of compatibilism (Broadie, *Ethics with Aristotle*, 130–131, 155–159, 172; Irwin, ‘Reason and Responsibility,’ 141).

⁹² Kenny's influential argument that the two cannot be separated in any final way need not concern us here (*Will, Freedom and Power*, 142–144).

Aristotle maintains the latter. But some question about whether he can hold the former has arisen from considerations of his thought within classic free will debates. Whereas freedom of spontaneity has no limits except when it is meant to deny coercion, freedom of indifference does run up against a limit in terms of what an agent can want. Aristotle is not usually held to advocate as strong a version of the freedom of indifference as that held by Charles Taylor, for instance. For Taylor, '[t]he question can always be posed: ought I to re-evaluate my most basic evaluations?'⁹³ Human agency, thus conceived, includes within it a possibility of revising our principles as unlimited as our capacity for self-reflection. For Aristotle, in contrast, because of the desire component of action—because our desires are shaped by a childhood upbringing not fully in our control and because changing dispositions we rationally recognize requires time—at least what we want right now is not fully in our control.⁹⁴ This, albeit put with considerably less force, is Edwards's underlying rationale for why a divinely orchestrated conversion is necessary for appreciable progress to be made in moral development. But despite the close similarities on the formal level, Aristotle does seem to allow both more room between thought and action and more autonomy for thought over and against desire than does Edwards's 'immediate' conception of the will. The purpose of this section is to highlight those features of Aristotle's program of moral development that question whether the FOLD_f in Edwards's thought is sufficiently robust to be able to serve as a foundation for it.

Although in Aristotle's account, nonrational desires can 'act up' and marginalize or displace it, human rationality includes a 'reflective space enabling reason to form a direction,' a 'distance between the [part of the self] responsive ... [to reason] and its impulses that allows the response, so formed, to go forward into the world as an actual event.'⁹⁵ As Aristotle affirms in the *De Interpretatione*, because 'not everything is or happens of necessity' [19a18] and the chance occurrence of the particularities of life leaves even more general states of affairs open to future

⁹³ Charles Taylor, 'Responsibility for Self,' in *Free Will*, ed. Gary Watson (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 124.

⁹⁴ Of course, Aristotle holds agents accountable for states of character that stem from situations that were in their control to avoid (Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, 148, 154). But because one can ultimately trace back character to situations that were not in an agent's power to choose or avoid (e.g., parents, social background, educational opportunities) full accountability for character is usually ruled out (*ibid.*, 161–164).

⁹⁵ Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, 105.

contingents (such as whether a person is good or bad), 'what will be has an origin both in deliberation and in action' [19a8].⁹⁶ If things did happen by necessity, '... there would be no need to deliberate or to take trouble' [18b31].⁹⁷ With regard to that portion of Aristotle's philosophy of action that concerns us here, the contingency opened up by human deliberation and action is asserted in the power of reason to execute a choice in conflict with what the agent otherwise desires.⁹⁸ As Broadie puts it, nature has endowed human beings with '... the ability in general to stand by a choice even when it is difficult or unwelcome.'⁹⁹ This ability is presupposed by Aristotle in the very concept of rational choice and is the basis in human nature both for children's acquisition of virtue and adults' expression of virtue. Although it is most manifest in new situations where agents must actively attend to and deliberate about all particularities and eventualities, the freedom of reason implicit in deliberation still takes place even when agents with highly established character traits encounter the familiar. The final goal of moral development for Aristotle is in any case the state where the nonrational desires that make up at least part of the motive-structure of human action act in conjunction with the rational desires that arise out of deliberation and choice.¹⁰⁰

How do well-enough-brought-up adults exercising the freedom noted above achieve this state? It is by maximizing opportunities for moral growth through the interface of their individual natures, universal reason, and the luck of opportunity. Although, especially in childhood, it also must involve this, habituation is anything but a mindless process of repeating things by rote. Reason must be involved to determine what

⁹⁶ Jonathan Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Edition*, 2 Vols. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1984), 1: 30.

⁹⁷ Barnes, ed., *The Complete Works of Aristotle*, 1: 29.

⁹⁸ For a treatment of how Aristotle's analysis of *akrasia* relates to virtue ethics more generally, see Marcia L. Homiak, 'Aristotle on the Soul's Conflict: Toward an Understanding of Virtue Ethics,' in *Reclaiming the History of Ethics: Essays for John Rawls*, ed. Andrews Reath, Barbara Herman and Christine M. Korsgaard (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1997), 7–35. As we shall see in the next section, I am less interested in whether it is possible to regard *x* as the most desirable course of action as a matter of deliberation but be led to do *y* instead in the moment of action than whether it is possible to be inclined to do *x* in the manner of a fixed habit but choose to do *y* instead as a result of deliberation.

⁹⁹ Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, 279.

¹⁰⁰ Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, 105; Cooper, 'Some Remarks,' 241, 249; Sparshott, *Taking Life Seriously*, 200.

the unique occasion uniquely demands.¹⁰¹ Regardless of the strength of the ensuing freedom or the precise nature or timing of the transition, adult human agents must eventually take over primary responsibility for their own acquisition and fine-tuning of this state from familial and cultural role models. When they do, they must do what Aristotle blames alcoholics for not doing when they claim that, being drunk, they were not in control of what was offensive in their actions.¹⁰² They must use reason to put themselves into situations that allow the maximal opportunities for the expansion of virtues and diminution of vices.

Through an exercise of the intuitive, logical, practical, deliberative, volitional and truth-seeking dimensions of reason, then, Aristotle regards human beings in the middle stages of moral development as mostly able to manage the processes of their own habituation. If our primary caretakers and role models were reasonably successful at translating the 'what' of basic moral education to the midpoint of understanding the 'why' of full virtue, we can begin to navigate for ourselves such complex goals as when to shrink from dangerous situations while still generally pushing through difficulties that do present themselves, how not to be overly indulgent in pleasures while still not becoming uncomfortable with the manner in which the rightful enjoyments of pleasure can reinforce the good person's motivations to pursue highly virtuous acts, how to take best advantage of moral paradigms without being overly rigid or 'mechanical' in their application, and how to pursue a definite vision of the good while still being 'emotionally flexible.'¹⁰³ At least at that point where desire is trained by early childhood development not to undermine or interrupt the agent's appreciation for the good life as a whole, Aristotle assumes that rational agents are, in Irwin's words, 'capable of doing more than simply acting on the desire they find to be strongest; they can also affect the strength of their desires by further deliberation.'¹⁰⁴ The maximization of opportunities to grow

¹⁰¹ Richard Sorabji, 'Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue,' in Amelie O. Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1980), 216. Myles F. Burnyeat has a less 'intellectualist' view of virtue ('Aristotle on Learning to Be Good,' in Amelie O. Rorty, *Essays on Aristotle's Ethics* [Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1980], 80).

¹⁰² *NE* 1110b25–27; Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, 148, 311n37.

¹⁰³ Burnyeat, 'Aristotle on Learning to Be Good,' 71–75; each of the elements of this list are terms used and discussed by Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, 98.

¹⁰⁴ Irwin, 'Reason and Responsibility,' 131. Irwin does not attribute this position to Aristotle, but rather to what he takes to be general intuitions or assumptions about agency. As Francis Sparshott observes, '... the actual thought processes of deliberation

morally exemplifies this use of reason in several different ways. Those who aspire to full virtue must not only choose the mean virtue between the extremes in confronting situations not of their own choosing, but they must also choose to put themselves into the kinds of situations that maximize their moral growth. We must have knowledge of the world to judge correctly the differing situations in which we will find ourselves, knowledge of ourselves to predict our limitations and what we can be productively challenged with, knowledge of the good to try to bring ourselves further in line with it, and knowledge of deliberation itself to make the right sorts of judgments about the most productive means of achieving it.¹⁰⁵ We may lack something in one or another of these dimensions of 'reason in action' and thereby reduce the extent to which our deliberation issues forth in acts that fully engage our freedom to regulate our own habituation. Broadie is nevertheless correct in concluding that 'we act on the assumption that we shall not be prevented from doing *something* towards what we aim for, even though the assumption has often been proved wrong.'¹⁰⁶ We now turn to consider whether there are grounds for making these, or similar, assumptions in Edwards's thought.

There are several ways of trying to minimize the force of the foregoing objection. A first way would be to underscore the preconditions standing in the background of Aristotle's conception of moral agency. When one tallies up on how many fronts the category of the adult agent is restricted by good fortune in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, one can use this as leverage for scaling back what freedom actually obtains on the global

about means can be separated out, identified, and cultivated, though there will be nothing virtuous about these in abstraction from their relation to a context of virtuous action. ... [T]he quality of moral insight, the correct identification of occasions for action in relation to a grasp of what the good life is, will be an intellectual virtue, but not one that can be separately cultivated, since it effectively reflects one's basic moral character' (*Taking Life Seriously*, 198). See also Cooper, 'Some Remarks,' 239. This is not to say that thought and desire are entirely separate faculties for Aristotle. Similar to Edwards, Broadie remarks of Aristotle's view of the relationship between reason and desire that '[w]e are bound to think of rational choice as a composite product of thought and desire when we view it in terms of its roots in different parts of the soul; but the concrete product itself is a natural unity of complementary aspects' (*Ethics With Aristotle*, 217).

¹⁰⁵ The reason why moral agents must know themselves as individuals is that the mean between the extremes that constitutes virtue is the mean 'relative to us' (*NE* 1106a32–1106b7; Kenney, *Will, Freedom and Power*, 96).

¹⁰⁶ Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, 151; italics original.

level.¹⁰⁷ One must rule out from the formal discussion of moral agency, for example, the incontinent, the bestially vicious, the poorly educated, and the morbid. That all candidates for adult agent status must already recognize at some level that the life of virtue is not only the most noble end of human striving but the happiest life further reveals how dependent Aristotle's conception of freedom is dependent on extra-agent factors.¹⁰⁸ One might also try to challenge the extent to which the theoretical differences I have identified between Edwards and Aristotle's conception of moral agency are retained in a consideration of practical cases. One can challenge, for instance, whether the scenarios where (i) virtuous persons actually *would* be inclined towards virtue but choose by reason and deliberation to act against it or (ii) where morally bad persons are inclined toward vice with a fixed inclination but nevertheless choose virtue by means of reasoned deliberation conform to lived experience.¹⁰⁹ Third, one could argue that the only real manner in which Aristotle escapes fatalism is that wherein the habituation process implies a concept of consent.¹¹⁰ That is to say, agents must give their full consent to the manner of life expressed by the habits for which they are being praised if those traits will in fact be internalized—the capacity for which is also dependent on education and early childhood development.¹¹¹ While these counter-objections are not to be slighted, fairness to Aristotle requires me to admit that such factors cannot be conclusive. Commentators may describe the power of reason to act contrary to

¹⁰⁷ Through close familial relationships and friendships, e.g., we are substantively, perhaps even irreplaceably, assisted in our pursuit of the good. See Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness*, 43–72; Cooper, 'Aristotle on the Goods of Fortune' and 'Friendship and the Good,' 292–311, 336–355; and Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, 128. See also Giuseppe Cambiano, 'Becoming an Adult' in *The Greeks*, ed. Jean-Pierre Vernant, trans. Charles Lambert and Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1995), 86–119.

¹⁰⁸ Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, 171.

¹⁰⁹ I believe Sparshott is basically correct in asserting that while Aristotle does not specify that the 'idle wishes for reform' among the vicious are necessarily useless, the weight of his argument goes against fundamental remediability (*Taking Life Seriously*, 132–133).

¹¹⁰ Broadie, *Ethics With Aristotle*, 161, 172.

¹¹¹ The further argument would also have to be made that Aristotle regards some general class of moral knowledge as incipient to human beings as such, enabling all the opportunity not to consent to the development of bad traits. Some interpreters indeed seem to take this line or something like it. Broadie seems to envision a logical bent in our nature toward the noble (*Ethics With Aristotle*, 109–110). Sparshott hypothesizes that perhaps nearly all children get the minimal level of moral habituation needed to be the kind of agent Aristotle is addressing in the *NE* (*Taking Life Seriously*, 85).

desire in stronger or weaker terms, but Aristotle's conception of human agency encompasses in some ineradicable sense the ability to make a reasoned deliberation against strong inclinations beyond Edwards's FOLD_f.¹¹² Nevertheless, Aristotle's more substantive account of freedom does not, in my view, translate into an equally different account of characterological change. In the remainder of this section, I will venture to give at least the rudiments of an account of how, in allowing agents to affect future volitions, Edwards does grant human agents freedom to manage their own programs of habituation to some extent.

Using Edwards's recognition of the varying strengths of nonvirtuous habits, one begins to get a sense for the progression toward virtue an agent can make exercising the FOLD_f. Given the fixedness and self-replicating nature of habits, present inclinations are unassailable in the present moment. Even at the initial stages of moral struggle, when the agent has minimally exercised his or her freedom to increase the strength of countervailing prevolitional desires against an entrenched habit of vice, substantive progress remains unlikely.¹¹³ There is no question, however, that Edwards grants that the moral inability due to the fixedness of habit admits of more and less. 'A person whose strength is no more than sufficient to lift the weight of one hundred pounds,' he writes, 'is as truly and really unable to lift one hundred and one pounds, as ten thousand pounds; but yet he is further from being able to lift the latter weight than the former'¹¹⁴ The analogy works just as readily the other way around: if one's moral ability is barely sufficient to resist a decidedly entrenched habit of one hundred pounds of 'volitional pressure,' one's ability to resist the habit must be greater when its fixedness is reduced to a strength of sixty pounds. Having ruled out as an explanation of how moral change happens a conception of choice in which a sovereign will imposes itself on the flow of experience as an outside force, an alternative explanation opens up out of the dependence of the present flow of varying inclinations on the past flow of varying inclinations.

Based on this understanding of the underlying nature of human consciousness and volition, moral change proceeds in the context of the

¹¹² Sparshott expresses a strong view of this power when he takes as 'Aristotle's essential thesis' the view that '... our vices and virtues are the outcome of our choices, and whenever we choose to say yes we could choose to say no' (*Taking Life Seriously*, 130).

¹¹³ *WJE* I, 307–308.

¹¹⁴ *WJE* I, 307.

ever-changing stream of preponderating delight and aversion. Again, the strength of this type of preponderance varies. On one end of the spectrum would be a single 'raw' inclination just barely superseding a contrary 'raw' inclination in its 'strongest motive' status.¹¹⁵ On the other end of the spectrum, Edwards supposes '... none will deny, but that, in some cases, a previous bias and inclination, or the motive presented, may be so powerful, that the act of the will may be certainly and indissolubly connected therewith.'¹¹⁶ What determines the strength of an inclination is the content of the agent's past experience.¹¹⁷ Once the progress from past experience to present inclination establishes itself in fixed dispositional patterns, these patterns retain a significant power to replicate themselves in the future volitions that make up the continuing stream of consciousness.¹¹⁸ Moral change marks the shifting of the proportionate strength and content of habitual response as the past self gives way to the present self and, in turn, to the unfolding future self. 'Stacking the deck' of prevolitions by thinking, desiring or inclining toward an end different from the vicious habit gradually makes it easier to resist that habit in the future. Further 'stacking the deck,' further reducing the psychic force of the previously entrenched habit, may eventually allow the agent to move out of the territory of moral inability altogether. That is, even when one is speaking in terms of the inclinations a person presently has, which in the case of entrenched habits it is impossible to change, the strength of habit can be so diminished by the application of contrary prevolitional thoughts and desires, that the previously entrenched habit no longer has dominance. In this regard, Edwards grants as a matter of principle the '... supposition that not all propensity implies moral necessity, but only some very high degrees'¹¹⁹ Strictly speaking, there is nothing precluding even quite

¹¹⁵ I use the term 'raw' here to signify that, technically speaking, Edwards regards the various sense and cognitive data to which the will responds as impinging on it *en masse* rather than separately. The will is the strongest motive in a sense that precludes the positing of discrete and competing motives, one of which 'wins out' over the rest.

¹¹⁶ *WJE* 1, 157, 330.

¹¹⁷ Edwards is not always careful to regard the character as always subject to a diversity of volitions in the will proper. In 'Miscellanies' No. 380, for instance, he regards it only possible to commit the unpardonable sin when it is 'from [a] full will, from a settled malice, with a rational, deliberate, full design' (*WJE* 13, 450).

¹¹⁸ This is the phenomenon that Augustine calls the 'chain of habit' in the *Confessions* 8.5. Edwards gives a few instructive examples of how he employs this concept in his analysis of moral necessity (*WJE* 1, 160).

¹¹⁹ *WJE* 1, 359*n*1.

radical changes of habit proceeding along these lines. Human agents can develop one part of their characters, with regard to one action or trait that is not morally necessitated, and once that is fixed, they might then have, in the future, a chance to gain leverage against what in the past were morally necessitated vices.

In Edwards's account of moral development, present prevolutions cannot immediately change the dispositions of the volition proper. There is a more forceful or direct means of explaining this process in Aristotle. Because the self is free in the present to act against the strongest desire by means of the force of reason, each action immediately alters the chance of further expression of this action. For Edwards, in contrast, a preponderance of prevolutions against the trajectory of ingrained traits must be built up before any actual 'sum total volition proper' can put a real possibility for change before the self. And yet, it must be stated that the $FOLD_f$ is no less a real freedom to govern the self's program of habituation for being indirect or delayed. Indeed, the more the change is underway, the more similar the two accounts look. Once the increasing number of prevolutions placed into the 'pipeline' connecting prevolution to volition proper may be seen to exert their presence among the sum total of the agent's inclinations, once the future catches up with the present, as it were, some momentum is exerted in the direction of these prevolutions becoming the content of the volition proper in successive moments of experience. Persistent prevolution then shifts the trajectory of an agent's character more slowly and subtlety in Edwards's ethics than the persistent exercise of reason's more substantive and immediate freedom shifts the trajectory of an agent's character in Aristotle's ethics. Something of the impact of this difference is muted, however, by the fact that for the Greek, as much as for the Puritan, while one action reinforces the disposition to do that action again, no single act can be regarded as having a lasting effect on an agent's habits. The agent must still repeatedly will, deliberate, choose, and act contrary to preexistent habits if substantive moral change is to occur.

Edwards and Maastricht on Freedom and Secondary Causes

The ethical position underlying Edwards's utilization of the 'practical syllogism' discussed in Chapter 1 does not represent a controversial feature of Edwards scholarship. With Ramsey's forceful commentary on

the subject, nor does Chapter 2's conclusion that Edwards adopted a primarily inherent conception of Christian righteousness. I have admitted throughout this portion of the book that multiple options regarding the more precise functionality of Edwards's conception of virtue are possible: both the more traditionally Calvinist reading and the counter-reading I am seeking to develop. The current chapter's insistence that Edwards recognized some minimal degree of human freedom may not be regarded as controversial either. For the freedom I have attributed to him is limited and still operates within a broadly determinist conception of the self in its unyielding insistence that present volition remains manifestation of the sum-total of an agent's past volitions. Edwards unequivocally holds the view of Malebranche before him, that is, on the absolute dependence of the cultivation of virtue on God's unmerited bestowal of the indwelling Holy Spirit. 'By making himself known,' Malebranche indicates, 'by making Himself tasted, God makes Himself loved. God is the end, and His action in us is the motive of our love.'¹²⁰ It is only at the point when (i) God enlightens the mind by granting a clear idea of the divine nature and (ii) when God 'animates' the soul with a valuation that is sustained by the indwelling of 'the love He bears toward Himself' that the would-be saint can begin the difficult road of making that aspect of the beatific vision a habit rather than an occasional act.¹²¹ The sacraments, for Malebranche, further help the agent endowed with the Holy Spirit's love of the divine nature but nonetheless dragged down by the concupiscence of fallen human nature build up 'enough strength to form momentarily the resolution to sacrifice our passions to the love of Order ...' and 'by the aid of grace acquire charity or the habitual and dominant love of immutable Order'¹²² As long as it remains governed by an overarching stipulation that it is insufficient to cross the chasm from reprobate to regenerate, little irreconcilable conflict between the FOLD_r (thus stipulated) and classic Calvinist tropes seems imminent.

The results of Chapter 3 included the view that Edwards allowed for some dimension of human cooperation in the redemptive process—or, to use scholastic vocabulary, that the will is a secondary cause of grace. If God does grant human beings a dignity that requires either rational or volitional consent to the redemptive act of God marked by conver-

¹²⁰ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 104.

¹²¹ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 64–65.

¹²² Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 98.

sion, this still need not be seen as an autonomous act of will. It can also be plausibly regarded as a condition that is conjointly provided by God in the redemptive act itself. At least when taken on its own then, the component of Edwards's robust theory of virtue discussed there was as unobtrusive as those components discussed in previous chapters. But the FOLD_f in conjunction with a robust conception of secondary causality does begin to create some theological ripples. The remainder of the book will seek to show Edwards moving elliptically outside of the Reformed orbit most familiar to interpreters for whom the neo-orthodox and evangelical tropes of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Calvinism are primary touchstones. And I want to briefly forecast this shift in tone and argumentation before commencing.

One prominent thrust in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Reformed thought is certainly the supposition that God's salvific will is the efficient cause of each phase of the *ordo salutis*. As we shall have occasion to discuss in more detail in chapter 5, the perseverance of the saints is for Francis Turretin accomplished not on the basis of God's maintaining the elect in the kinds of virtues indicative of the relationship between justification or sanctification, nor even in the kind of faith the elect perceive in themselves and/or God sees in advance but, absolutely, on the decree of God. Turretin does not deny that there are conditions of election subsequent to election, but insists 'that it is a less proper way of speaking because the condition ought not to be confounded with the means; and it is one thing for a thing to be decreed under a condition, but another for it to be decreed as to be brought about through such means.'¹²³

Peter van Mastricht, however, categorizes the *ordo salutis* differently, distinguishing the regeneration of the first grace in which justification takes place from the subsequent conversion wherein the will is actually turned to God. By stipulating that '... in regeneration, there is not bestowed upon the elect, any *faith*, hope, love, repentance, &c. either as to habit or act; but the *power* only of performing these exercises, is bestowed; by which, the regenerate person doth not as yet actually believe, or repent; but only is *capacitated* thereto' Mastricht accomplishes what many Reformed sought to accomplish in the 'seed' of faith

¹²³ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing House, 1992), Vol. 1, 316 (Fourth Topic, Question 3, section II).

motif in which no fluctuation in the exercise requisite of faith was tantamount to apostasy.¹²⁴ In so doing he intentionally shares the Reformed staple that ‘all and every one, who is regenerated, will also be brought to *conversion*, sanctification, faith and repentance, and so to salvation.’¹²⁵ One no doubt unintentional consequence of this move of Mastricht’s, however, is that a greater degree of cooperation between God’s will and the human will is opened up for the portion of the *ordo salutis* beyond the first grace of regeneration. Mastricht is concerned to accentuate that while ‘spiritually *dead*’ and having a ‘*heart of stone*’ human beings are not treated by God in regeneration as ‘the same as a stock or a stone’; part of this humanity is the use of a will. Once regenerated and ‘*being turned, he [the agent] actively converts and turns himself to God by the power of his grace.*’¹²⁶ But what cooperation is explicitly ruled out in the case of the first regeneration Mastricht then allows in the case of perseverance (Perkins and Ames as are cited as examples).¹²⁷ ‘[A]fter a spiritual quickening is effected by regeneration,’ he writes, ‘a man may, in conversion, co-operate with God unto the exercising of faith and repentance....’¹²⁸ By commandments and exhortations of spiritual and moral renewal, ‘God doth not mean to bring about *regeneration*, as it denotes the *first* infusion of the spiritual life; but the drawing forth of that life, which is infused by regeneration, into the *second* acts or consequent exercises’¹²⁹ Among the most consequential features of Mastricht’s account as a backdrop for Edwards’s conception of causality and freedom is the further observation that such a mechanism of commandment or exhortation, falling as it does under the heading of the ‘*moral* suasion, of the *external* call’, is resistible.¹³⁰ Ultimately, as I have stated, Mastricht himself affirms the perseverance of the saints on no less forceful a footing than election and predestination;¹³¹ but a conceptual possibility arises here that is closed off for a figure like

¹²⁴ Peter van Mastricht, *A Treatise on Regeneration, Extracted from his System of Divinity, called, Theologia theoretico-practica; and faithfully translated into English; With an APPENDIX containing Extracts from many celebrated Divines of the reformed Church, upon the same subject* (New Haven: Thomas and Samuel Green, 1770), 28; italics original.

¹²⁵ Mastricht, *Treatise on Regeneration*, 13; italics original.

¹²⁶ Mastricht, *Treatise on Regeneration*, 37; italics original.

¹²⁷ Mastricht, *Treatise on Regeneration*, 42.

¹²⁸ Mastricht, *Treatise on Regeneration*, 33–34.

¹²⁹ Mastricht, *Treatise on Regeneration*, 36; italics original.

¹³⁰ Mastricht, *Treatise on Regeneration*, 40.

¹³¹ Mastricht, *Treatise on Regeneration*, 43.

Turretin who does not so forcefully separate two spheres of the regeneration process (one cooperating with God's causality and the other not).

I shall argue that Edwards follows Maastricht in forcefully separating the regenerative moment (justification) from subsequent efforts within sanctification; and I believe both of his account of the will as a secondary cause of grace and his account of freedom ought to be read as further movement along this trajectory created by Maastricht. Certain caveats must be registered from 'Miscellanies' No. 1263, where the human will operates as a secondary cause of grace but within a broader dependence upon God's primary and (at least in some respects) efficacious causality. Edwards's conception of the will's freedom is nevertheless substantial enough to sustain the kind of purposive self-shaping minimally required for the habitual model of moral development this chapter has considered. If this is the case, and if I am right in Chapter 2 to hold that Edwards's adaptation of the Neoplatonic metaphysics of emanation from the Cambridge Platonists committed him to a substantially 'inherent' conception of Christian righteousness, then divergent interpretive possibilities lying beneath the surface consensus that Edwards granted virtue an important place in his ethics can corroborate and amplify each other into more forcefully different readings of the mature ethics.

With respect to the ecclesiastical writings discussed in Chapter 6, for instance, Edwards clearly wishes to make some allowance for factors outside the agent's control—not the least of which is election into grace and the continued indwelling of the holy spirit.¹³² But an even more forceful invocation of responsibility follows hard upon any exemptions. The regenerate, for instance, have it well within their ability (within the broader providential framework of the ordinances instituted for the church and whatever 'signs' of God's nature can be said to inhere

¹³² Those regenerate persons who are kept out of the church because their possession of the habit of sanctified charity was not perceived by fallible human application of his highly restrictive requirements for full church membership, for instance, are not held responsible by God for the deficiencies they suffer as a result (*WJE* 12, 298). At the Last Judgment, Edwards seems to be saying, God's mercy deems that the kind of converted agents in question made as much use of the operative resources for post-conversion habituation as they had access to and so should not be blamed for falling below an otherwise standard proportion of sanctified versus unsanctified habits. As Edwards noted in *Freedom of the Will*, '... whatever power men may be supposed to have to surmount difficulties, yet that power is not infinite; and so goes not beyond certain limits' (*WJE* 1, 157).

in nature itself) to pursue practices that tend to the maintenance of the ingrained habit of sanctified charity. Self-scrutiny is described by Edwards as a practice necessary to the cultivation of assurance. He maintains that ‘... the Apostle directs professing Christians to “try” themselves, using this word indefinitely, as properly signifying the examining or proving a thing whether it be genuine, or counterfeit’¹³³ He also recommends the pursuit of factual and doctrinal knowledge. At least, those ‘destitute of sufficient knowledge’ are identified as falling out of appropriateness for full church membership because, not knowing what assurance of salvation consists in, they cannot move toward realizing it.¹³⁴ Because would-be saints have it within their volitional power to seek out opportunities to ‘try’ their spiritual ‘gold’ by the ‘fire’ of self-sacrifice, however, we will see that it is possible for agents to botch their self-managed maintenance of assurance of salvation.¹³⁵ Sanctified charity could then in principle be indistinguishable from other habits in being diminished by repeated mistakes in discernment, choosing incorrect courses of action, or acting imprudently. Because Edwards’s adaptation of the Neoplatonic doctrine of emanation commits him to a view of *visible* charity as a *sine qua non* of sainthood, it may further be that Edwards thereby makes salvation itself just as dependent upon contingent human action. The results of Chapter 5—where I shall discuss the perseverance of the saints—and Chapter 6—where I shall discuss how assurance of salvation is maintained by the kind of prudential reasoning promulgated in Puritan casuistic sources—will reveal how significantly a possibility this is.

¹³³ *WJE* 12, 259; Edwards cites James 1:3 regarding patience as an evidence of faith in this respect.

¹³⁴ *WJE* 12, 174.

¹³⁵ *WJE* 2, 93.

CHAPTER FIVE

COMPLICATING PERSEVERANCE

The Perseverance of the Saints as a Theological Crossroads

The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints commonly arises in Reformed thought at the intersection between justification and sanctification. As discussed in Chapter 1, Calvin affirms the connection between justification and sanctification in his concept of grace as offered in these simultaneous but distinguishable gifts.¹ This idea reappears in his treatment of assurance of faith, and for good reason. An eventual following of sanctification upon justification is required by the gradual deepening of knowledge about God as one gets closer to (or by) feeling more confident in God's benevolent will toward oneself. Taking good works as what Edwards would call an *a posteriori* sign of election is nevertheless dangerous for Calvin. Not only can faith not be objectified by good works because the fullest expression of good works come *after* justification in the *ordo salutis*, Calvin is also concerned that '... doubt would enter the minds of all men, and at length despair, while each one reckoned ... how far away he was from the condition laid down for him.'² The reprobate, moreover, are capable of at least some highly good actions too. As John Cotton (1693–1765), pastor of Halifax, put it pithily 150 years later, '[t]here is no Grace, but a Hypocrite may have something like it; and there is no Duty done by a Christian, but an Hypocrite may outstrip him in it.'³ It is common in Reformed thought for such good works not to be required absolutely for assurance—one has that through the apprehension of faith itself—but there is a sense in which the weakness of the human frame requires its secondary sup-

¹ John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion* ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960) III, xi, 1; see also *Institutes* III, xvi, 1; *Institutes* III, iii, 1; and *Institutes* III, ii, 8.

² *Institutes* III, xiii, 3; ed. McNeill, 765–766.

³ John Cotton, *The Separation of the Tares and Wheat reserved to the Day of Judgment: A Sermon Preached upon a particular Occasion at Attleborough, in the County of Bristol, January 9, 1746* ... (Boston: S. Kneeland and T. Green, 1746), 4.

port for divesting from a life of sin unworthy of one grateful to God. In an early sermon affirming one classic form of the doctrine of perseverance, Edwards writes that '[u]nless the redemption of Christ secured man's perseverance through all opposition it would not be a complete redemption.'⁴ Would-be saints need to know in advance that their efforts will not be wasted, that the possibility of progress can be made actual, and if actual, then permanent.

Despite palpable connections with many central themes in the corpus, the doctrine of perseverance is not often treated as a distinct topic in the secondary literature on Edwards.⁵ One reason certain has to do with the fact that aside from a section in the 'Controversies' notebook published many years after his death in a version so edited as to be unrecognizable from the original, he never wrote a discrete discourse on this subject. But perhaps the general presumption that he can be more or less subsumed within nineteenth- and twentieth-century neoorthodox or evangelical readings of Reformed dogmatics has made this undertaking seem unnecessary anyway.⁶ I will approach Edwards's views on perseverance as an open question, moving back and forth between his occasional mentions of the subject and the broad patterns in his mature thought established in previous chapters to navigate the many ambiguities we shall find. When these inferences lead me to suggest that seemingly straightforward affirmations of positions akin to the nineteenth- and twentieth-century Calvinist dogmatics hold within them ambiguities compatible with more open-ended conceptions of the Reformed tradition it is not because I think Edwards was self-deceived or that he was not a very good judge of his own place in intellectual history.⁷ Rather, I will invoke Quentin Skinner's explanation of the disjunct between doctrinal univocality and the ordinary

⁴ 'Grace Never Overthrown,' *WJE* 8, 346.

⁵ Two notable exceptions to this general rule are Conrad Cherry, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards: A Reappraisal* (Garden City, N.Y.: Anchor Books, 1966), 82–84; and Anri Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation* (University Park, Penn.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), 137–142.

⁶ Morimoto documents aspects of this trend (*Jonathan Edwards and the Catholic Vision of Salvation*, 7–8, 103–104). It is interesting to note, however, that even Morimoto, who seeks to draw parallels between Edwards's thought and Catholic soteriology (*ibid.*, 7–8, 104, 159), upholds a fairly standard Reformed conception of perseverance (*ibid.*, 137–142).

⁷ These are the principal reasons for discounting first-person statements by authors delimited by Skinner ('Motives, Intentions and the Interpretation of Texts,' *New Literary History* 3 No. 2 [Winter 1972]: 393–408).

diffuseness of human thinking over time.⁸ After all, Edwards's corpus was not intentionally written as a systematic whole but as a series of polemical responses to problems he faced in his immediate intellectual and social environment. The force of this fact is only augmented when one appreciates the philosophical complexity of the issues involved. John Coolidge offers a crucial reminder that 'Puritanism is a *commentaire vécu* on the Bible.'⁹ Demarcations of what constitutes 'orthodoxy' within shifting socio-cultural contexts are accordingly very slippery, as Janice Knight productively documents in the prudential program of 'dissembling' among the 'Sibbsean' circle of American Puritans.¹⁰ All thinkers within religious traditions work within the framework of acceptable boundaries. Many great thinkers seek to push those boundaries outward from within rather than inward from the outside. For all of these reasons, Edwards scholars should be, as David Hall suggests social historians are, 'less confident that language coincides with action or behavior.'¹¹

Recall our Chapter 1 conclusion that Edwards's insistence that salvation must carry with it some degree of sanctified habits may be qualified and adjusted into compatibility with a multiplicity of Reformed views. Merely the stipulation itself does not answer, for instance, whether the virtues of sanctification are to be subsumed within the concept of justification, so that anyone who can confidently call God father definitionally possesses the 'habit' of sanctified charity at a level it is not soteriologically interesting to quantify. Nor does this stipulation establish whether proper inferential directionality runs the other way around, wherein justification would be subsumed within a concept of sanctification. In the latter view, only those who possess, habitually, the kind of highly self-sacrificial virtue that was part and parcel of Edwards's conception of true virtue would be justified. I shall not desist in this

⁸ Quentin Skinner, 'Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,' *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History* 8, No. 1 (1969): 16–23, 28–30, 48–49.

⁹ John S. Coolidge, *The Pauline Renaissance in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1970), 141.

¹⁰ Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), 35–36, 46, 71, 123.

¹¹ David D. Hall, 'On Common Ground: The Coherence of American Puritan Studies,' *William and Mary Quarterly* 44 (April 1987): 222. George M. Marsden's recent biography sensitively captures the career pressures Edwards faced in several key early addresses often cited as stalwart evidence of his orthodoxy along narrow lines (*Jonathan Edwards: A Life* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], 91, 141, 177).

chapter from admitting the inconclusiveness of Edwards's views on this theological topic when disconnected from an integrated narrative of the development of broader swathes of his thought. I will, however, begin to claim support for a more determinate reading of the mature ethical position (including on the perseverance of the saints) based on the logic that connects the broad Edwardsean themes documented in the previous four chapters.

The following sections of the chapter are structured by the consideration of four of the most prominent Reformed options on perseverance Edwards might have adopted. I will begin with two different versions of a view of assurance of salvation that rely upon a less stringent practical syllogism: (type i) that sanctified virtues, while a desirable feature of discipleship, are not conditions of justification and (type ii) that it is only necessary for a marginal threshold of sanctified virtues to be reached episodically. Both of these options, I suggest, cannot finally accommodate the full substance of Edwards's connection of high degrees of virtue with the regenerate state. We will then consider two Reformed options that are more plausibly ensconced at the putative core of Edwards's ethical position. Each is compatible with Edwards's stringent form of the practical syllogism but each subsequently expends a good deal more explicit effort than he did directly connecting the maintenance of virtue with God's absolute sovereignty. The first is the view (type iii) that God preserves regenerate agents non-contingently in the ethico-religious states that enable them perpetually to infer justification from sanctification. A second version of this conception of perseverance (type iv) is the 'Thomistic' view on created v. increased grace in which God infallibly upholds the regenerate while keeping freedom in some sense intact. All four types will be admitted to command a modicum of support from various places in the corpus, but the incontrovertible mainlines of Edwards's desire to maintain a minimal degree of moral freedom and a minimal degree of moral autonomy vis-à-vis secondary causality can ultimately be shown to be violated by globally adopting any of them. Type (iv) nevertheless exhibits some remarkable resilience that it will take two subsequent sections to disarm. The section of the chapter immediately following my treatment of type (iv) considers the early sermon-discourse 'Justification By Faith Alone' and the posthumously published 'Treatise on Grace.' I will there demonstrate that qualifications made in texts routinely cited to demonstrate the impeccability of Edwards's Calvinist credentials under a (type iv) perseverance also embody a more substantial conception of secondary

causality than it can countenance. The penultimate section of the chapter notices how the development of ‘Miscellanies’ entries seem to shift from an earlier, more imputation-based and monergystic conception of perseverance to a view more consistent with the ‘logic of virtue’ we have been developing in later entries. The final section of the chapter offers a provisional sketch of a fifth type of view on perseverance—more common in seventeenth-century Reformed thought than in the American Calvinist options with which many interpreters of Edwards are more familiar—in which his Calvinism can be shown to be in harmony with the Aristotelian-Neoplatonic philosophy of virtue he adapted.

Divesting Salvation from Assurance—I

There is a prominent current in the Reformed stream of thought on perseverance that challenges the notion that assurance of salvation and salvation must be integrally connected. Although Calvin believed some germ of real sanctification is given the elect, and faith does have a self-reflexive dimension, the possibility of a disjoint between salvation and assurance of salvation nevertheless arises where salvific status is more predominantly correlated to faith than to effects of faith in human activity. The Westminster Confession, for instance, more or less affirms the possibility of persevering in salvation without persevering in assurance of salvation.¹² Though ‘[t]hey whom God hath accepted in his Beloved, effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, can neither totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace ...,’ it asserts they ‘... may ... fall into grievous sins; and for a time continue therein: whereby they incur God’s displeasure, and grieve his Holy Spirit; [and] come to be deprived of some measure of their graces and comforts’¹³ Richard Muller writes that John Downham (1570?–1652) ‘... views the imputation of Christ’s righteousness as forensic rather

¹² For a succinct summary of the kind of issues in early Anglo-American Puritanism which led some to separate faith from the ‘reflex act’ that constituted a true perception of faith (and thus assurance of salvation), see Michael P. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Grace in Massachusetts, 1636–1641* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 12–27.

¹³ *Westminster Confession* [17.1, 17.3], in Robert Shaw, *An Exposition of the Confession of Faith of the Westminster Assembly of Divines* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1846), 197, 198.

than actual and therefore argues the imperfection of sanctification and holiness in this life and the inability of even the regenerate of fulfilling the covenant of works.¹⁴ Francis Turretin takes a similar position on the disconnection when he writes that for the regenerate person, 'the seed of God remains in him and helps to defend him from sin.'¹⁵ This is so much the case, Turretin writes, that '[t]hat act of regeneration, in which is the foundation of relation because it cannot have been, cannot but be; for his seed which remains in him makes an eternal bond of relation, as the Son of God is always what he is once. And although that seed does not always bring forth fruit in the believer as to the second act, it does not follow that it does not remain as to the first act (as life remains in a tree during the winter when it can bear neither leaves nor fruit).'¹⁶

Thomas Hall's sermon on perseverance preached in London's Lime-Street Lecture series (November 1730 and April 1731) is illustrative of the Calvinist response to those contingents of British nonconformity that resisted the 'Rational Dissent' movement.¹⁷ It takes the view that perseverance 'respects the state of believers, but not their frames; or ... the principle of grace, but not its present exercise.'¹⁸ A definition of sanctification as substantially virtuous habits beyond the state of chosenness itself is not a component of such a view of perseverance (type i). The relation to God as 'that of children to a Father' is what is guaranteed to endure and does so despite the fact that 'the children of God, by their frowardness and remissness in their walk, may provoke him to deny them the light of his countenance ... for a time.'¹⁹ For Hall, the Holy Spirit does indwell in the saints; but the indwelling is not in the moral capacities of the person, but in the adopted relation to

¹⁴ Muller 'Covenant and Conscience in English Reformed Theology: Three Variations on a 17th Century Theme,' *Westminster Theological Journal* 42 (Spring 1980): 317.

¹⁵ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, trans. George Musgrave Giger, ed. James T. Dennison, Jr., (Phillipsburg, N.J.: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing House, 1992), Vol. 2, 604 (Fifteenth topic, Q. 16).

¹⁶ Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 2:604 (Fifteenth topic, Q. 16).

¹⁷ See Knud Haakonssen, ed. *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge [U.K.]: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1996).

¹⁸ Thomas Hall, 'The Doctrine of Perseverance in Grace, Stated and Defended; In Two Sermons,' in *A Defense of Some Important Doctrines of The Gospel in Twenty-Six Sermons Preached at the Lime-Street Lecture By Several Eminent Ministers* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publications, 1840), 336.

¹⁹ Hall, 'The Doctrine of Perseverance in Grace,' 340, 340–341.

God.²⁰ This is not merely the outward failure of putting an active grace into practice. Rather, Hall more deliberately allows that ‘the operations of grace may be interrupted, and, through the violence of temptation, the strength of corruption, or some spiritual decay, the actings of grace may be suspended’²¹ Failure in exercise, even internal exercise without outer expression—Hall cites the case of Peter—is not tantamount to loss of grace or failure in perseverance.²² Nor is any even cooperative volition regarded as a condition. Rather, ‘all means necessary for the establishment of this good work [the perseverance of the saints], are under the direction of God; and all obstacles which would threaten a disappointment, are subject to this control.’²³

The ‘Treatise on Grace’ Edwards wrote during the middle portion of his career has, together with supporting references in the ‘Miscellanies’ and other unpublished writings, generated a reading of Edwards’s soteriology that would seem to allow distinctively regenerate qualities to be of a non-habitual, nascent, or non-visible variety (type i perseverance). The image of a ‘mustard seed’ is invoked to characterize the potentiality of the seed of elective grace to be very small indeed.²⁴ As discussed in the Introduction, this aspect of Edwards’s thought has been substantially developed by Sang Lee. Building on Lee’s interpretation of Edwards’s ‘dispositional ontology,’ Anri Morimoto argues that the disposition to act on faith ‘... may not always coincide with the time of infusion, [such that] ... when there is no occasion to exercise itself in faith, the infused disposition remains there unexercised.’²⁵ Morimoto uses this concept of disposition to suggest how Edwards may be used as a theological resource for understanding the salvation of infants and non-Christians.²⁶ The latter view has been appropriated by Gerald R. McDermott in a provocative portrait of Edwards’s engagement with the ‘inclusivism’ of Deism.²⁷ McDermott suggests that ‘... Edwards made it clear that the disposition is more important than religious and moral behavior, for while the character of a saving disposition is con-

²⁰ Hall, ‘The Doctrine of Perseverance in Grace,’ 359–360.

²¹ Hall, ‘The Doctrine of Perseverance in Grace,’ 341.

²² Hall, ‘The Doctrine of Perseverance in Grace,’ 342.

²³ Hall, ‘The Doctrine of Perseverance in Grace,’ 336–337.

²⁴ ‘Treatise on Grace,’ *WJE* 21, 159.

²⁵ Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards*, 32.

²⁶ Morimoto, *Jonathan Edwards*, 33–35, 64–66, 162.

²⁷ Gerald McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion, and Non-Christian Faiths* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

stant, religious and moral expectations differ according to the degree of revelation available The inner disposition, not any particular acts and exercises, is the only essential prerequisite to salvation.²⁸ This point is echoed by George Marsden who notes that '[y]oung children might have saving grace, even if they did not live long enough for it to come to fruition in identifiable signs of conversion.'²⁹ Some evidence for a (type i) view can also be found in the 'Controversies' notebook section of entries on perseverance. In the middle of an extended set of reflections on Old Testament paradigms of perseverance, Edwards observes in connection with Prov. 24:16 and Ps. 37:24 that 'It seems manifest ... by the SS. ... in the Instances of the Greatest falls & defections of true saints that in the Time of their fall true Grace did not utterly Cease in them'³⁰ The prominence of this reading in some recent work on Edwards makes it worth discussing at some length in connection with the perseverance of the saints.

Despite the occasional evidence, such a view of perseverance does not sit well with incontrovertible aspects of Edwards's ethical position. If it were possible for a person to lose the high levels of virtue foundational to assurance of salvation without losing salvation itself, it is difficult, for instance, to make sense out of those substantial strands

²⁸ Gerald McDermott, 'A Possibility of Reconciliation: Jonathan Edwards and the Salvation of Non-Christians,' in *Edwards in Our Time: Jonathan Edwards and the Shaping of American Religion*, ed. Sang Hyun Lee and Allen C. Guelzo (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1999), 185. It is interesting to note, however, that as McDermott's defense of this claim unfolds, he nonetheless refers to the standard Aristotelian conception of disposition as an operative motive to actual action at least as frequently as he refers to the alternative conception of disposition as a principle of soul somehow apart from action (*ibid.*, 186–192). While still drawing on the *prisca theologia*, typology, and ontology as the sources for a recognition of some religious truth in non-Christian religions, McDermott seems to scale back his earlier, more expansive, soteriological conclusions in a recent comparison of Edwards and John Henry Cardinal Newman. 'While Edwards,' McDermott there writes, 'conceded that some pagan doctrines contained traces of truth, he believed they were usually demonic imitations of divine types' ('Jonathan Edwards, John Henry Newman and non-Christian Religions,' in *Jonathan Edwards Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Helm and Crisp, 134).

²⁹ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 27.

³⁰ 'Perseverance,' 'Controversies' notebook, 107, *Works of Jonathan Edwards* office typescript of Beneicke Rare Book and Manuscript Library Edwards papers manuscript, Yale University. 'SS' presumably refers to sacred scripture. The mostly unconnected entries span roughly fifteen years. This passage falls within the first two folio pages of entries, which places it between the late 1730s and the early 1740s. The two ellipses in the quotation mark places where, respectively, 'in' and 'that' were crossed out. I thank Kenneth Minkema for making a typescript of the manuscript available to me and for assistance with matters of pagination and dating.

in Edwards emphasizing the practical syllogism. Edwards regards the attributes spoken of in Rom. 5:4–6 as not promised merely allegorically or eschatologically, but as actual ‘spirits’ in this life.³¹ The visibility the saints on earth have is the same type of behavior putatively made manifest by the saints in heaven.³² Just as the production of figs is the best evidence that a tree is a fig tree,³³ the best evidence for justification is the resemblance between the ‘light’ that emanates from the saint toward the neighbor and the light that emanates from God toward the saints. This distinctive spirit of Christian love is made visible not only personally but also corporately in the church. Edwards cites I John 2:12–14, 21 and IPet. 2:5,9 as indicating how the apostles spoke of the church as a community visibly set apart from the common run of person by the virtue of its members.³⁴ The love the brethren show each other is one sign of this visibility.³⁵ Showing love to one’s enemies and suffering to alleviate the material wants of the needy are also subjects of Edwards’s reflections on the requirements of discipleship.³⁶ As English Puritan Thomas Manton puts it, ‘[t]here is none goeth to heaven without their tryal: As the way to *Canaan* lay through an *howling wilderness* and *desart*, so the path to heaven lyeth through much affliction.’³⁷ To love and suffer through the trials created by the insistence upon loving in an imperfect world is to show oneself possessed of Christ’s spirit. If emphasis is placed on the ‘true,’ which I think is quite plausible given the powerful motif of separating true virtue from semblances of virtue in Edwards’s writings, Edwards may be also said to agree with Henry More’s statement that ‘...’tis plain, that whatever is Intellectual and truly Moral, is also Divine, and partakes of God.’³⁸ There is no way to have what salvation is without also having what assurance of salvation is because they are based on the same thing.³⁹

³¹ *WJE* 12, 196.

³² *WJE* 12, 195; *WJE* 2, 432.

³³ *WJE* 2, 443.

³⁴ *WJE* 12, 247.

³⁵ *WJE* 12, 252–253.

³⁶ *WJE* 8, 214.

³⁷ Thomas Manton, *A Practical Commentary: an exposition with notes on the epistle of James* (London, 1651), 86; italics original.

³⁸ Henry More, *Enchiridion ethicum* (London, 1690; New York: Facsimile Text Society, 1930), 80.

³⁹ *WJE* 2, 194.

Divesting Salvation from Assurance—II

The concern in Reformed thought to free the elect from fears about falling out of God's favor through moral lapses does not exclusively take the form of making justification a forensic matter of adoption. Some thinkers have also defended a conception of perseverance in which a certain threshold of ethico-religious virtues must indeed be reached for assurance of salvation but only episodically (type ii). Full emanation of God's nature in the present can yield a state of character, that is, in which sanctified charity is less than habitual. William Perkins observes in *Cases of Conscience*, for instance, if 'the testimonie of the Spirit be wanting ... the sanctification of the heart, will suffice to assure us. We knowe it sufficiently to be true, and not painted fire, if there be heate, though there be no flame.'⁴⁰ The 'first beginnings, and motions of sanctificatio[n],' moreover, are sufficient to testify to the presence thereof: '[f]irst, to feele our inward corruptions. Secondly, to be displeased with our selves for them. Thirdly, to beginne to hate sinne. Fourthly, to grieve so oft as we fal and offend God. Fifthly, to avoid the occasions of sinne. Sixthly, to endeavour to doe our dutie, and to use good meanes. Seventhly, to desire to sinne no more. And lastly, to pray to God for his grace.'⁴¹ The fact such states were ever reached would, according to this line of reasoning, be a sign of election ever co-present with the faith given in conversion. 'One apple,' as Perkins puts it, 'is sufficient to manifest the life of the tree'⁴² At least in *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, so too did Thomas Shepard advocate a version of this position. Shepard supposes that 'though it seems to a man's feeling to be quite quenched and put out, that a man find no more than a reprobate, yet the seed of God remains, and it will break out again.'⁴³ He understands why the fact that in some 'the spirit of grace and sanctification runs very low ... so little that they can scarce see it by the help of spectacles' would regard their imperfectly waxing and waning sanctification as 'a blotted evidence' which one 'may have ... to-day, and

⁴⁰ William Perkins, *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience* (Cambridge: John Legat, 1606; Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1972), 77.

⁴¹ Perkins, *Cases of Conscience*, 77; the original letters 'v' and 'u' have been reversed according to modern usage.

⁴² Perkins, *Cases of Conscience*, 78.

⁴³ Thomas Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, in *The Works of Thomas Shepard, The First Pastor of The First Church, Cambridge Mass* (New York: AMS Press, 1967), Vol. 2, 352.

lose ... tomorrow'⁴⁴ Shepard speculates that one of the reasons why low ebbs of sanctification cause the saints such distress of assurance is that 'they look only to this, and not unto Christ, and their justification by faith.'⁴⁵ But he nevertheless reasserts the importance of sanctification as an inescapable component of assurance. The saints, though with 'much changeableness ... and unevenness in their course,' are not ponds which, when emptied, 'will never fill again till the clouds above it pour down rain,' but springs, which, 'though it sees no clouds in the heavens, yet it runs of itself, and will fill itself again.'⁴⁶

The requirement of only intermittent or occasional expressions of charity (type ii perseverance) is less awkward a reading of Edwards's position than (type i) because, while it does make it considerably less discriminating, it does not discount the very efficacy of the practical syllogism. And it is not without a certain margin of textual support. In several key moments in the 'history of redemption,' for instance, Edwards emphasizes that

God is sovereign in his dispensations of providence; he bestowed the blessing on Jacob, even when he had the lie in his mouth; he was pleased to meet with Solomon, and make known himself to him, and bless him in an extraordinary manner, while he was worshipping in a high place; he met with Saul, when in a course of violent opposition to him ... going to Damascus to persecute Christ; and even then bestowed the greatest blessing upon him, that perhaps ever was bestowed on a mere man.⁴⁷

These scriptural narratives may not be directed at whether those of low-level virtue may nevertheless consider themselves saved. They are as much about to whom God may choose to give saving grace. But they do at least show Edwards's acceptance that God may sometimes make exceptions to the regularities of ordinary providence. On the one hand, 'If grace being once in the heart ben't a certain and infallible sign that a man shall have eternal life,' Edwards asks in 'Miscellanies' No. 327b, 'how is the Spirit of God an earnest of glory, when a man may have the Spirit and it be no assurance that he is to be glorified?'⁴⁸ In an entry from the 'Blank Bible' on Isaiah 42:3 from roughly October 1726–October 1727,⁴⁹ Edwards remarks, on the other hand, that the

⁴⁴ Shepard, *The Sound Believer*, in *Works*, Vol. 1, 260.

⁴⁵ Shepard, *The Sound Believer*, in *Works*, Vol. 1, 260.

⁴⁶ Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, in *Works*, Vol. 2, 365.

⁴⁷ *WJE* 12, 319.

⁴⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 327b, *WJE* 13, 406.

⁴⁹ This is dated by Stephen J. Stein ('Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 15, 44–45).

same thing can be ‘applied to particular saints’ that applies to the church persevering under bruising and smoking: ‘[t]hough the church sometimes be so suppressed that it’s hardly visible—we can hardly see whether there be any fire or no, but only the smoke—yet it shall never be wholly destroyed.’⁵⁰ A portion of the *Religious Affections* also seems to support this line when Edwards likens true saints to ‘the fixed stars, which, though they rise and set, and are often clouded, yet are steadfast in their orb, and may truly be said to shine with a constant light.’⁵¹ Grace can be present even when sanctification is not shining as brightly and constantly as it should. Edwards further affirms that while the saints may backslide to some degree they cannot revert to the stage of open hostility to God, e.g., ‘... they can never fall away so, as to grow weary of religion, and the service of God, and habitually to dislike it and neglect it’⁵² These lines could be pushed in such a way, from either end, that makes the line between persistent virtue and occasional vice very difficult to draw. Pushed far enough, losing high degrees of virtue would no longer be tantamount to losing the affections indicative of sainthood *in toto*. George S. Claghorn finds just such a rationale in Edwards’s response (in a letter fragment) to a criticism of the *Religious Affections*, i.e., evidence ‘[t]he correspondent ... takes, in Edwards’ view, a non-Calvinistic stance on election’ possibly based on ‘the doctrine of falling from grace.’⁵³ Edwards does not, ‘suppose there is anything in the Greek word [*bebaios*], any more than the English word “firm,” that hinders it being used for the firmness of evidence ... or the firmness of a thing with regard to its evidence to the mind, any more than the firmness [of] the thing itself.’⁵⁴ When he adds in connection with II Pet. 1:10 that the term is used ‘in this same sense, when ... [the apostle Peter] exhorts those he writes to to make their calling and election sure’ he emphasizes the distinction between a metaphysical certainty, a ‘thing firm and established in itself’ and an epistemological certainty, a thing ‘firm and sure as to the evidence of it’⁵⁵ At least

⁵⁰ ‘Notes on Scripture,’ No. 79, *WJE* 15, 73.

⁵¹ *WJE* 2, 374. Also it is noteworthy that one such affirmation of the ‘thenceforward’ nature of true sainthood, Edwards gives one of his statements that such a person is no more under the dominion of sin despite what foibles in high level practice they make (*WJE* 2, 341–342).

⁵² *WJE* 2, 390; see also *WJE* 2, 391.

⁵³ George S. Claghorn, ‘Introduction to the Related Correspondence,’ *WJE* 8, 631.

⁵⁴ Edwards, ‘Unpublished Letter on Assurance and Participation in the Divine Nature,’ *WJE* 8, 637–638.

⁵⁵ Edwards, ‘Unpublished Letter on Assurance and Participation in the Divine

one implication, the implication Claghorn apparently draws, is that the metaphysical certainty can remain despite fluctuations in evidences of epistemological certainty (such as good works).

A certain flexibility of usage as to what kind of constancy constitutes a habit is unavoidable for any realistic use of the practical syllogism in everyday affairs. Actual human beings always have spikes of desire, fantasy, and faults that run counter to the main currents of their moral identities. Nevertheless, it must be said that when Edwards integrates the emanation model of the Holy Spirit's indwelling he drew from Cambridge Platonism into his account of the 'practical syllogism,' he did so to counteract fuzzy boundaries not to embrace them. The idea that discipleship makes great demands that only true saints are able to meet is present in some form as early as the 1738 *Charity and Its Fruits* sermon series. The task of distinguishing between true virtue and its various semblances—e.g., natural self-love, natural conscience, and natural instincts—remained very important to Edwards even after the 'communion controversy' of the late 1740s and early 1750s was over and lost. Whereas the multi-tiered order of perfection common in Neoplatonism can accommodate a potentially infinite array of gradations of participation in Being, we have seen that the *Two Dissertations* clearly claims that persons either have true virtue (the enlarged perspective human beings who share in God's charity may enjoy in this life) or they do not. What for classic Reformed thinkers allows diversity of actual levels of virtue in the otherwise inflexible two-tier system of regenerate and reprobate is the doctrine of imputed righteousness and the centrality of faith as the foundation of assurance of salvation. But since we have seen that Edwards mostly relied upon an inherent conception of righteousness and a strong connection between faith and works, this apologetic strategy remains awkward for him. Low-level or otherwise non-habitual charity is not sufficient for Edwardsean *visible* sainthood.

Any discussion of this term must nevertheless take into account David Hall's point that in seventeenth century 'debates and discussions on both sides of the Atlantic the term "visible saint" became increasingly elastic'⁵⁶ With Edwards's strong cautions against over-confidence in third-person judgments of true sainthood in the *Religious Affections*, we

Nature,' *WJE* 8, 638. Claghorn uses Thomas Shafer's ink and paper analysis to date the drafting of the letter between March 13, 1746 and September 23, 1747 (Claghorn, 'Introduction to the Related Correspondence,' *WJE* 8, 634–635).

⁵⁶ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 31.

have what is perhaps the most common rationale invoked for including him within this orbit of classic Reformed thought.⁵⁷ The onus of perfectionism was often cited against Edwards as a reason why a 'profession of godliness' ought to be accepted as the sign of 'visible sainthood' historically requisite for full church membership rather than a firmer insistence upon visible sainthood itself. Edwards sought to defend himself against this charge. And he does admit that it is possible to be mistaken about whether visible sainthood has real sainthood as its foundation.⁵⁸ But neither human imperfection of application nor divine privilege of exception mollify the reality of the rule in the created order.⁵⁹ Edwards's ready acceptance that Jacob, Solomon, and Saul were given special privileges from God comes with the important caveat that in exceptional cases such as this '[t]he conduct of divine providence, with its reasons, is too little understood by us, to be improved as our rule.'⁶⁰ The ordinary rule, which Edwards finds often enough in Scripture to think he understands fairly well, is that abundant good works are fruits of the Spirit.⁶¹ When Edwards insists that '... if we make the word of Christ our rule, then undoubtedly those marks which Christ and his apostles did chiefly lay down, and give to us, that we might try ourselves by them, those same marks we ought especially to receive, and chiefly make use of, in the trial of ourselves' what he is insisting upon is the

⁵⁷ Whether Edwards successfully discharged himself from the substantive objection of overscrupulosity is debatable. He himself did not think that the specific program for church reform he put forward used too high or too specific a measuring stick to distinguish the godly from the ungodly.

⁵⁸ He is careful to claim only 90% accuracy for the rule connecting visible virtue and salvation (*WJE* 12, 180).

⁵⁹ *WJE* 2, 194, 420; *WJE* 12, 493. This is why one of the ways Edwards casts the danger of allowing the unregenerate into full membership is that they will choose bad ministers who don't know the scriptural rules about knowing people by their fruits (*WJE* 12, 309–310). But see Edwards's appeal to the parable of the ten virgins (*WJE* 12, 228, 493). This parable seems misplaced in Edwards's defense of perseverance in high levels of sanctified charity as the ultimate measure of visible sainthood because he is emphasizing the extent to which it can be known whether or not a person has true charity without needing to wait for perseverance. See Ava Chamberlain's provocative treatment of Edwards's sermon series on this parable and its relationship to the *Religious Affections* ('Brides of Christ and Signs of Grace: Edwards's Sermon Series on the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins,' in *Jonathan Edwards's Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation*, ed. Stephen J. Stein [Bloomington and Indianapolis, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1996], 3–18).

⁶⁰ *WJE* 12, 319.

⁶¹ *WJE* 12, 319, 431.

ordinarily inextricable relationship between virtue and salvation.⁶² 'To speak of Christian experience and practice, as if they were two things, properly and entirely distinct,' Edwards insists, 'is to make a distinction without consideration or reason.'⁶³

Again, standing behind the practical syllogism is Edwards's substantial adaptation of the Neoplatonic metaphysic of emanation. "[P]robability" is '... an appearance, which so far as we have means to judge, is for the most part connected with the thing.'⁶⁴ And 'the thing' of regeneration is the divine nature. Those in whom the Holy Spirit dwells manifest the habitual virtue which is vital functioning of divine love itself. As the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth puts in his famous 1647 sermon to the House of Commons at a high tide of Puritan (Calvinist) ascendancy, 'God cannot draw a Curtain betwixt himself and Holinesse, which is nothing, but the *Splendor* and *Shining* of himself'⁶⁵ Edwards shares Thomas Shepard's strong sentiment that it would be 'blasphemy' to suppose that the Spirit which Jesus had was 'had without measure' and that the 'many divine qualities, habits, or graces' he had 'were hypocritical or common, which the faithful receive from his fullness, and wherein they are made, in their measure, like unto him.'⁶⁶ The persistence of what Edwards called 'natural temperament' and the possibility of 'backsliding' are not to be denied.⁶⁷ When Christ 'savingly' lives within a soul, the resulting grace is 'as much from Christ, as the light in a glass, held out in the sunbeams, is from the sun.'⁶⁸ But the regenerate still hold their sins in a different way: 'true repentance does in some respects, especially turn a man against his own iniquity'⁶⁹ If the various participants in the Westminster Assembly could adopt a view of assurance of salvation which can be lost without comparable loss of salvation itself, the connection between virtue and salvation runs too deep in the logic of Edwards's thought for him to do the same. It does not make sense to speak of love without the practices indicative of that love; and practice implies persistence. If one has 'the

⁶² *WJE* 2, 437.

⁶³ *WJE* 2, 450.

⁶⁴ *WJE* 12, 406.

⁶⁵ Ralph Cudworth, 'A Sermon Preached before the House of Commons,' *The Cambridge Platonists*, ed. C.A. Patrides (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 121; italics original.

⁶⁶ Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins*, in *Works*, 2:209.

⁶⁷ *WJE* 2, 341, 390.

⁶⁸ *WJE* 2, 342.

⁶⁹ *WJE* 2, 342.

lamblike, dovelike spirit of Jesus Christ' at all, one manifests it consistently.⁷⁰ 'True grace is like true gold ...' Edwards observes, 'it will bear the trial of the furnace without diminishing. And it is like the true diamond: it will bear a smart stroke of the hammer and will not break.'⁷¹ Constancy under strain and duress is not, therefore, merely an ideal that those who are rightfully included in this category may or may not live to the fullest. Rather, persistence in true charity its part and parcel of its highly visible nature. Real sainthood is a subset of visible sainthood with very little remainder.⁷²

The extremely restrictive criteria Edwards placed on the motive-structure of benevolence to Being in general needs to be kept firmly in mind at this juncture as well. The contrast between regenerate and unregenerate sensibilities, so intertwined with Edwards's account of assurance of salvation, cannot be excised from Edwards's account of the state of salvation itself to ease Calvinist scruples. To lack the stuff of which assurance of salvation is made is to lack salvation. When saints are newly converted, their spiritual appetite or 'hunger' for God has been profoundly whetted. 'Tis as much the nature of one that is spiritually new born,' Edwards writes, 'to thirst after growth in holiness, as 'tis the nature of a newborn babe, to thirst after the mother's breast'⁷³ While this ecstatic experience might well represent a high water mark in the natural ebbs and flows of the spiritual life, the experience of God's loving presence carries with it all the *tremendum* and *fascinans* of Rudolf Otto's account of the *mysterium*.⁷⁴ A moderate 'hunger' for God exhibited by the would-be saint can only be commensurately indicative of a mediocre or incomplete conversion; and the crux of Edwards's adaptation of Neoplatonism for *Reformed* purposes is that a mediocre or incomplete conversion is not a conversion at all. True hunger for God involves a willingness to suffer in God's cause. 'Christ teaches us that they who do not count the cost, and close with religion as offered with all its difficulties,' Edwards writes, 'are like to come off with shame at last.'⁷⁵ The disproportion between worldly shame and eternal beatitude

⁷⁰ *WJE* 2, 200.

⁷¹ 'Images of Divine Things' No. 162, *WJE* 11, 107.

⁷² *WJE* 12, 183.

⁷³ *WJE* 2, 377.

⁷⁴ Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry Into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Relation to the Rational*, trans. John W. Harvey (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 12–40.

⁷⁵ *WJE* 8, 318.

is part of what makes Edwards comfortable affirming that ‘every true Christian has the spirit of a martyr.’⁷⁶ If a person does not have ‘... a spirit to suffer all things for Christ ... because they make a reserve of such cases of suffering as they are not willing to bear[t]hey choose ... that Christ’s glory should stand by, as being set aside, and made to give place to their ease and interest.’⁷⁷ It is unlikely that a person will put up with the furthering of God’s glory through the *imitatio Christi* over a lifetime if he or she does not love God regenerately.⁷⁸ One either loves God above all things or hates God; and there are only two kinds of people.⁷⁹ ‘Unless those words of Christ can fall to the ground, “Ye cannot serve two masters,” and those of the Apostle, “He that will be a friend of the world, is the enemy of God”; and unless a saint can change his God, and yet be a true saint.’⁸⁰

God’s Maintenance of Assurance and Salvation—I

Other thinkers have explored different means of expressing the Reformed confidence in the perseverance of the elect than qualifying the connection between justification and sanctification as embryonic and/or episodic. While the practical syllogism is left intact, they insist that it is divine causality that preserves regenerate agents (non-contingently) in the ethico-religious states that enable them perpetually to infer justification from sanctification. We will be considering two versions under this general description. In his lengthy treatise on perseverance, for instance, the English Puritan John Owen (1616–1683) seems to affirm one version of this possibility (our type iii). Owen recognizes some degree of freedom of will in perseverance but still upholds a fairly stringent version of the irrevocability of the divine will. He writes that ‘... when we deny that believers can possibly fall away, it is not an absolute impossibility we intend, nor an impossibility with respect to any principle in them only that in and from itself is not perishable, nor an impossibility in respect of the manner of their acting, but such an one as, principally respecting the outward removing cause of such an

⁷⁶ *WJE* 8, 322.

⁷⁷ *WJE* 8, 316–317.

⁷⁸ *WJE* 8, 214–215.

⁷⁹ *WJE* 12, 216.

⁸⁰ *WJE* 2, 391.

actual defection, will infallibly prevent the event of it.⁸¹ Owen held that the sins of regenerate persons never get so prominent that they may be said to have been given full consent.⁸² For though 'ways and means' of grace are used that leave the will free to choose within the range of moderate sin,⁸³ it is still God that prevents the elect from getting to the degree of sin indicative of damnation.⁸⁴ As Joel Beeke puts it, 'God preserves His saints *in holiness*. Christ saves His people *from*, not *in*, their sins.'⁸⁵ Theophilus Gale, who indeed showed a preference for Owen among contemporaneous thinkers he generally ignored,⁸⁶ takes a similar position. It will be recalled from the Introduction that Gale does not take the imputed view of Christian righteousness one might expect in a Puritan tract that critiques the 'schoolmen' in their use of Aristotelian philosophy. The Jansenism he defends is instead on the grounds that the virtue which is so indicative of the divine nature should be recognized for being created by God. '... [V]irtuose habits,' he stipulates, 'are not naturally produced by virtuose acts, but given in by God of mere Grace.'⁸⁷ Gale then further takes the line, commensurate with Owen but primarily on the basis of human inability rather than on the basis of God's faithfulness, that God is the efficient cause of those whose virtue perdures. 'The Soule is wel compared to a Glasse without a foot,' he writes, 'which so long as the Divine hand holds there is no danger of its being broken; but if God withdraws his hand, it soon fals to the ground, and is dashed in pieces'⁸⁸ He deals with the possible objections that this dissipates the liberty of virtue by taking the uncouth move to affirm that only those who are thus upheld by

⁸¹ Owen, *The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance Explained and Confirmed*, in *The Works of John Owen*, ed. William H. Goold (London[?]: Johnstone & Hunter, [1654] 1850–1853; reprint Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965), Vol. 11, 530. John von Rohr suggests that William Prynne may have held a similar type of view in *The Perpetuitie of a Regenerate Man's Estate* (London, 1626) (*The Covenant of Grace in Puritan Thought* [Atlanta, Ga.: Scholar's Press, 1986], 82–83).

⁸² Owen, *The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance*, 514–519, 529.

⁸³ Owen, *The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance*, 36–39.

⁸⁴ Owen, *The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance*, 304.

⁸⁵ Joel R. Beeke, *Assurance of Faith: Calvin, English Puritanism and the Dutch Second Reformation* (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 218; italics original.

⁸⁶ Norman Fiering, *Moral Philosophy at Seventeenth-Century Harvard: A Discipline in Transition* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Published by the Univ. of North Carolina Press for the Institute of Early American History and Culture, 1981), 281.

⁸⁷ Theophilus Gale, *The Court of the Gentiles. Part IV Of Reformed Philosophie* (London: Printed by J. Macocke, for Thomas Cockeril, 1677), 105.

⁸⁸ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 92.

God are free.⁸⁹ Freedom is defined as the ability to be virtuous in the first place.⁹⁰

In support of the trajectory within Reformed thought wherein perseverance is God's maintaining the saints in high levels of virtue (type iii view) we can cite several more or less direct statements in Edwards's mature writings. In the *Religious Affections* he affirms that the true saint after a conversion is 'thenceforward' a holy person.⁹¹ There is also strong textual support for a non-contingent conception of perseverance in the conclusion to *Freedom of the Will*. Edwards there writes that '[i]f the beginning of true faith and holiness, and a man's becoming a true saint at first, don't depend on the self-determining power of the will, but on the determining efficacious grace of God; it may well be argued, that it is so also with respect to men's being continued saints, or persevering in faith and holiness.'⁹² Edwards affirms, à la Owen, that God can be said to direct even the most seemingly autonomous interiority of the will's participation in the acquisition and maintenance of habits.

Too much about the view of secondary causality Edwards developed in his encounter with the 'antinomian' strain of revivalism would, nevertheless, have to be jettisoned to make an Owenesque interpretation plausible. It will be recalled from Chapter 3 that Edwards posited a conception of God's transformative emanation that retained the God-given dignity of humans as rational beings with wills. The form this transformation takes, moreover, is love, a complex volitional-intensive affection that cannot in its nature be captured in terms equally applicable to the forced motions of an automaton. The centrality of consent in the extremely restrictive motive-structure separating true virtue from its many simulacra is also against such a reading.

God's Maintenance of Assurance and Salvation—II

If Owen's deity *directly* prevented the elect agent from succumbing to that level of sin indicative of damnation, the Thomistic deity moves the regenerate will *indirectly* to the kind of consent that would never pursue the kind of actions which, becoming habitual, would indicate

⁸⁹ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 394.

⁹⁰ Gale, *Court of the Gentiles, Part IV. Of Reformed Philosophie*, 76–77.

⁹¹ *WJE* 2, 84, 341, 383–384, 389.

⁹² *WJE* 1, 436.

damnation.⁹³ The wills of virtuous human beings are disposed towards the good without being forced, but no less infallibly for that.⁹⁴ Consistent with Thomas's view of second causes discussed in Chapter 3, here God *necessarily* achieves the end of perseverance. It cannot be the case that the agent God wills to persevere does not persevere; but it happens in such a way that the human agent still freely chooses the actions indicative of perseverance. God's will *qua* first cause is regarded by Thomas as able to move the human will in a manner that simultaneously preserves its modality as second cause. '... God's causation of our acts of willing does not destroy,' John Wippel helpfully puts it, 'the fact that the will has dominion over its own acts' as if 'it were subject to violence from an external agent'⁹⁵ This view is appealing for Reformed theologians. By not denying the dignity of rational agents *qua* second causes, they help protect God from the charge of injustice for damning the unregenerate. The door is also kept closed to the possibility that the end of God's will could be frustrated by human failure. The Molinist position discussed in Chapter 3 also closes this door, of course. God's salvific will cannot be frustrated by human failure because God knows infallibly what offer of grace those preordained to be saved would accept. But the Thomist position is preferable to Reformed theological commitments about innate depravity because in the Molinist position the offer of grace is made external to the will; God is not necessary to change the will to make it choose the good. In Aquinas's account of persevering grace, even a person in possession of habits inclining him to future good acts still '... needs the Divine assistance guiding and guarding him against the attacks of the passions'⁹⁶ Even once in the possession of grace, human beings do

⁹³ An earlier version of this chapter was given as a paper at the 2001 Annual Meeting of the Society of Christian Ethics, Hyatt Regency, Chicago, Illinois, January 6, 2001. I particularly thank the various respondents on that occasion for pressing me on this aspect of my interpretation of Edwards's position.

⁹⁴ *Summa theologiae* 2a2ae. 23, 2, rep., in Vol. 34, *Charity*, trans. R.J. Batten, O.P. (Oxford: Blackfriars; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975), 11, 13.

⁹⁵ John F. Wippel, 'Divine Knowledge, Divine Power and Human Freedom in Thomas Aquinas and Henry of Ghent,' in *Divine Omniscience and Omnipotence in Medieval Philosophy: Islamic, Jewish and Christian Perspectives*, ed. Tamar Rodabsky (Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1985), 225.

⁹⁶ *Summa theologiae* 1a2ae. 109, 10, rep., Benzinger, 1131.

not have the capacity in the Reformed view to avoid sin by their own powers without the further assistance of grace.⁹⁷

Samuel Willard, while maintaining some continuity with Owen's position, does seem to finally opt for something like this (type iv) view. He is unlike Owen in resisting any definite threshold of the exercise of charity for the regenerate. 'A Child of God in the exercise of his Grace,' Willard says, 'is by reason of the two contrary Principles lusting in him, like two Combitants, whom if we look on during their scuffle, sometimes the one, sometimes the other seems to prevail, but in the issue of the battel, one gets the Conquest, and this ever falls on the side of Grace.'⁹⁸ But the inevitability of waxing and waning of sanctification does not mitigate for him the requirement of meeting some basic covenantal conditions. 'Not only,' for instance, 'is the promise [of salvation within the covenant] upon a supposition, if you repent and believe; but the loss of all this good is denounced on failure of this'⁹⁹ Willard does share, however, Owen's greater insistence upon God's pre-eminent support of the entirety of sanctification. After indicating that the covenanted are required to satisfy conditions in the process whereby God uses human means to bring about divine ends, he nevertheless sweepingly 'refers the whole efficacy of all endeavours of Man to God, 1 Cor. 3.6. And we are given to understand that the new birth, which is the product of Conversion, is to be attributed to no second cause, but only to the first, Job. 1.13.'¹⁰⁰ Where Willard crosses forcefully into the territory of (type iv) perseverance is where despite the above stipulation of God's global efficacy on the entirety of regenerate, he still wishes to speak of human voluntariness being maintained. 'Though all beings have their dependence upon God for their activity, yet he hath put life into some, as a principle by which they act under him.'¹⁰¹ He wants to maintain, that is, a modality of human agency in the regenerate that operates subordinately to, but coterminously with, the grace continuously necessary to sustain them. Although it is not autonomous, it can be said to reflect the dignity of creatures that have reason and will. '[T]hough he be an Instrument, yet he is a living Instrument' Willard

⁹⁷ *Summa theologiae* 1a2ae. 109, 9.

⁹⁸ Samuel Willard, *A Compleat Body of Divinity* (Boston: 1726; New York and London: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1969), 522.

⁹⁹ Willard, *A Complete Body of Divinity*, 426.

¹⁰⁰ Willard, *A Complete Body of Divinity*, 427.

¹⁰¹ Willard, *A Complete Body of Divinity*, 459.

stipulates.¹⁰² ‘He lives, and so has a power of self motion in him.... And it is not only a moving, but a rational life that he hath.’¹⁰³ Freedom is compatible with the global efficacy of God’s agency.

In drawing out the implications of the ‘dispositional’ theory of God and reality for soteriology and ethics, Sang Lee has broached Edwards’s connection to the ‘Thomist’ compatibilism implicit in (type iv) perseverance. The crux of Lee’s analysis is a conception of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling wherein grace is “determining and decisive” but does not violate human liberty¹⁰⁴ This happens by means of the Holy Spirit’s acting ‘after the manner’ of a human disposition while still acting fully in the manner of a divine person of the trinity.¹⁰⁵ Because ‘[t]he prominent role played by “created grace” in the thought of Aquinas and the Scholastics in general was seen by the Reformers as a threat to the absolute sovereignty and gratuitous nature of God’s grace’ and because ‘for Aquinas faith is meritorious, while for Edwards it is not,’¹⁰⁶ Lee ultimately seeks to distance Edwards from the tradition of Protestant Scholasticism in which ‘the infusion of sanctifying grace as an entitative or ontological habit heals the sinner and also elevates him or her to a new level of being, with a new capacity to strive with free will toward a supernatural end.’¹⁰⁷ Lee seeks to retain for Edwards Thomas’s view that God is able to move the human will in a manner that simultaneously preserves its modality as second cause.¹⁰⁸ But his concerns about the more scholastic type infusion also make him want to retain some distance from Thomas. Lee instead argues that Edwards adopts a ‘unique synthesis’ of Aquinas’s view and Lombard’s which is more amenable to classic formulations of Reformed soteriology *qua sola gratia*: ‘specifically, of Lombard’s idea of grace as the Holy Spirit himself and of the Thomistic emphasis upon grace as functioning in and through the natural powers of the regenerate.’¹⁰⁹ He claims that ‘... Edwards reaches a compatibilist view of human freedom: for the human self to be determined in its understanding, volition, and action by its own internal disposition is not incompatible with either

¹⁰² Willard, *A Complete Body of Divinity*, 459.

¹⁰³ Willard, *A Complete Body of Divinity*, 459.

¹⁰⁴ Lee, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 21, 44.

¹⁰⁵ Lee, ‘Editor’s introduction,’ *WJE* 21, 56.

¹⁰⁶ Lee, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 21, 48, 74.

¹⁰⁷ Lee, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 21, 74.

¹⁰⁸ Wippel, ‘Divine Knowledge,’ 226.

¹⁰⁹ Lee, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 21, 52.

the voluntary and free character of human action or the self's responsibility for its action.¹¹⁰ I have considered in the foregoing several sources that support such a reading. Beyond what has been already mentioned, some important textual evidence is found in Edwards's statement in Book III of the only recently published 'Efficacious Grace' notebooks that '[w]e are not merely passive in it, nor yet does God do some and we do the rest, but God does all and we do all.'¹¹¹

Whereas each of the first three types ran afoul of Edwardsean mainstays documented in the previous chapters, this type is not so easily dispatched. And a great deal rides on the outcome. At stake are the precise boundaries between what should be regarded as the provisional core of Edwards's mature ethical position. If Edwards's views on perseverance are wholly conformable to Willard's 'Thomistic' compatibilism, then perhaps the kind of narrow neo-orthodox or evangelical reading I want to displace as the main interpretive frames for Edwards scholarship could be construed in such a way that it relegates the substantially inherent view of Christian righteousness and the robust practical syllogism to the periphery of Edwards's thought. If my counter-narrative is going to be successful I must be able to offer a plausible means of re-reading the evidence Lee and others have for the kind of 'Thomistic' compatibilism that maximizes the imputed dimension of Edwards's conception of Christian righteousness, minimizes Edwardsean second causes so as to be difficult to distinguish from occasionalism, and strips the practical syllogism of much of its bite by allowing a 'seed of grace' to stand in for full-blown sanctification. I believe I have sufficient textual and inter-textual evidence to make such a re-reading plausible. I nevertheless take the potentially destabilizing effect of Lee's influential interpretation seriously enough to devote most of the remainder of this chapter to rebutting it. In the following section, I will demonstrate that qualifications made in two texts routinely cited to demonstrate the impeccability of Edwards's Calvinist credentials (the sermon-discourse 'Justification By Faith Alone' and the recently authenticated 'Treatise on Grace') can be read in such a way that allows the 'logic of virtue' I've been developing an even more foundational place at the heart of Edwards's ethical position. I will then consider a progression of 'Miscellanies' entries pertaining to perseverance that mirror both my narrative of the development of Edwards's mature position and the re-reading I

¹¹⁰ Lee, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 21, 43.

¹¹¹ *WJE* 21, 251.

offer of the 'Treatise on Grace' and 'Justification by Faith Alone.' When I finally offer as much of a positive sketch of Edwards's views on perseverance as seems prudent given the paucity of sources, I will not seek to cut off all of the heads of 'Thomist' compatibilism that will grow back hydra-like in the following two sections. I will locate Edwards's position within the basic framework of compatibilism, but at the opposite end of the extremely wide spectrum of possible compatibilisms from Lee's attribution of a middle position between Thomas and Lombard. In Chapter 6 I will solidify this alternative even further in connection with supporting material from Edwards's biography of David Brainerd and his writings on church membership, sources highly underutilized as case studies for assessing Edwards's ethics.

Complicating the Established Canon as Context

'Thomistic' compatibilism is a highly elastic conceptual frame. It retains an almost infinite resilience to underscore the activity of God's hand beneath even the most seemingly autonomous human activity. Thomas Shepard, who with other 'Intellectual Fathers' documented by Janice Knight recognized the integrity of secondary causes of grace, can nevertheless speak of the Canaanite woman in Matt. 15 as someone who 'could not be driven away, though Christ bid her in a manner begone.' Here, 'the good is so sweet, it can not but taste and accept what God so freely offers the Spirit puts a necessity upon them, and irresistibly overpowers them, and this is the cause of it.'¹¹² Fortunately, my aim in this chapter is not to definitively establish what Edwards's views on perseverance were. The paucity of data makes this impossible. While offering a more modest hypothesis about the general contours of his probable view, I hope to highlight how different interpretive stances on this question reflect broader choices scholars make as to the texts, genres, periods, and ideas that should constitute a privileged core by which to place others texts, genres, periods, and ideas at less influential peripheries. I begin this process by offering a re-reading of two texts routinely cited to demonstrate the impeccability of Edwards's Calvinist credentials (according to nineteenth- and twentieth-century neoorthodox and evangelical standards thereof). I believe the early sermon-

¹¹² Shepard, *The Sound Believer*, in *Works*, Vol. 1., 195.

discourse 'Justification By Faith Alone' and the middle-period 'Treatise on Grace' can be as plausibly read to vindicate the logic of virtue I have been trying to establish as they can be invoked to displace it. The field of Edwards studies can only enter into the kind of maturity the study of other major figures in the history of Christian thought enjoy by increasing critical self-awareness surrounding pervasive hermeneutical dualities of this kind.

Above I noted the tension created in the practical syllogism when an either/or metaphysics of reprobate and regenerate is correlated to a much more fluid concept like 'ingrained habit.' The more regenerate agents try to manifest the gift of faith by manifesting persevering in good works, the more the question of assurance is displaced onto the qualification of what constitutes good works: e.g., purity of motive, level of supererogation, extent of admixture with sin, frequency, stability, and persistence. This tension is visible in the 'Treatise on Grace,' an authoritative edition of which is now available in the important collection of writings on the trinity, grace and faith edited by Sang Lee. Even though it must be the 'first principle' of the regenerate human 'plant' in order to count as the holy seed indicative of regeneration, this text finds Edwards using the image of a 'mustard seed' to characterize the potentiality of this seed being very small indeed.¹¹³ But it must also be noted that Edwards still insists that the person who possesses even a small seed of this regeneration cannot be appreciably bad. He precludes, in other words, *some* level of vice, albeit a potentially low level, from being compatible with the presence of the 'holy seed.' It is also important to note that Edwards's language strongly resists the concept of a forensic holiness in the sense of being merely imputed righteousness. He says that 'it is needless to dispute ... whether it [the seed] be a principle of true virtue and a holy nature in the soul, or whether it be the word of God as the cause of that virtue' because 'in either sense, it comes to much the same thing in the present argument'¹¹⁴ Even 'if by the seed is meant the word of God,' or imputed righteousness, 'yet when it is spoken of as abiding in him that is born again, it must be intended, with respect to its effect, as a holy

¹¹³ 'Treatise on Grace,' *WJE* 21, 159. This is supported by Edwards's later comment that '... he that has the least degree of life in him is alive' ('Treatise on Grace,' *WJE* 21, 163).

¹¹⁴ 'Treatise on Grace,' *WJE* 21, 159.

principle in his heart¹¹⁵ I read this as a strong caveat against any conception of the imputation of righteousness that does not encompass at least a minimal sense of inherent righteousness as well.

Such statements prove an important contrary echo to the multitude of scholarly voices that place the justification by imputation motif at the privileged core of Edwards interpretation. To dismiss the latter altogether would certainly be to overstate the case. Edwards does insist that '[a]ll the blessedness of the redeemed consists in partaking of the fullness of Christ, their head and Redeemer' as 'holy oil poured on the head, that goes down to the members,'¹¹⁶ an image that certainly has a symbolic or forensic quality to it. But it needs to be noticed that it appears after another image more suggestive of the concept of sharing the divine nature is invoked. The indwelling of the Holy Spirit causes characterological change. '[A]ll essences of good and excellent dispositions and exercises,' he writes, 'both towards God and towards man, are virtually contained and will flow from this one principle: love "suffereth long, and is kind; envieth not, ... endureth all things."¹¹⁷ If Edwards has given indications that he wishes to retain elements or echoes of an imputed view of Christian righteousness elsewhere in the treatise, he ends the work boldly proclaiming that saints 'are not only partakers of a nature that may in some sense be called divine, because 'tis conformed to the nature of God; but the very Deity does in some sense dwell in them.'¹¹⁸ They are 'made "partakers of God's holiness", not only as they partake of holiness that God gives, but partake of that holiness, by which he himself is holy.'¹¹⁹ He then stipulates that this holiness is love, '... that divine love in which the essence of God really flows out.'¹²⁰ The final two paragraphs of the treatise are devoted to affirming the coextensiveness of virtue and being 'spiritual': "[t]is the Spirit itself that is the only principle of true virtue in the heart. So that to be truly virtuous, is the same as to be spiritual.'¹²¹ The crucial question is again whether virtue is to be subsumed within the concept of holiness, so that anyone in whom the spirit dwells (regardless of whether his or her character is loving or not) is holy and thus virtuous,

¹¹⁵ 'Treatise on Grace,' *WJE* 21, 159.

¹¹⁶ 'Treatise on Grace,' *WJE* 21, 190.

¹¹⁷ 'Treatise on Grace,' *WJE* 21, 169.

¹¹⁸ 'Treatise on Grace,' *WJE* 21, 194.

¹¹⁹ 'Treatise on Grace,' *WJE* 21, 195.

¹²⁰ 'Treatise on Grace,' *WJE* 21, 195.

¹²¹ 'Treatise on Grace,' *WJE* 21, 197.

or, whether anyone who truly possess virtue (because it is the divine nature itself) must necessarily be holy.

The early sermon-discourse 'Justification By Faith Alone' is also widely cited to support Edwards's clear intentions to strain substantive invocations of virtue through the gauze of formulaic statements of Calvinist orthodoxy such as 'works righteousness.' And not without some good reason. More or less straightforwardly, the stated aim of this text is affirming what the doctrine of justification by faith alone affirms: what purchases justification is pure and simply Jesus' righteousness applied to an 'ungodly' person. 'When it is said,' Edwards writes, 'that we are not justified by any righteousness or goodness of our own, what is meant is that it is not out of respect to the excellency or goodness of any qualifications, or acts, in us, whatsoever'¹²² This means that not even faith itself, if by that is meant an autonomous believing in God or believing Christ's salvation applies to oneself, justifies. 'God don't give those that believe,' Edwards stipulates, 'an union *with*, or an interest *in* the Savior, in reward for faith'¹²³ This would, in classic Lutheran or Calvinist language, make faith a work.¹²⁴ There is no merit in the believer at all; the regenerate only receive justification as a gift, a gift of being viewed by God in a union with Christ not autonomously without Christ. Instead, 'God sees it fit, that in order to an union's being established between two intelligent active beings or persons, so as that they should be looked upon as one, there should be the mutual act of both, that each should receive the other, as actively joining themselves one to another.'¹²⁵ This union is the imputation of righteousness. '...Christ's perfect obedience shall be reckoned to our account, so that we shall have the benefit of it, as though we had performed it ourselves'¹²⁶ The fact that grace is free is important for showing God's benevolence and mercy in saving the unworthy from a fate they deserve.¹²⁷ Edwards writes 'it certainly shows the more abundant and overflowing goodness, or disposition, to communicate good, by how much the less loveliness or excellency there is to entice beneficence'¹²⁸

¹²² *WJE* 19, 155.

¹²³ *WJE* 19, 158; italics original.

¹²⁴ *WJE* 19, 160.

¹²⁵ *WJE* 19, 158.

¹²⁶ *WJE* 19, 186.

¹²⁷ *WJE* 19, 184.

¹²⁸ *WJE* 19, 184.

It nevertheless remains possible while encompassing many aspects of those familiar touchstones of modern American Calvinism to insist upon the inextricable connection of virtue with salvation in Edwards's thought. One means of demonstrating this in the small space I have available to me is by extrapolating further the crucial Edwardsean concept of 'meetness.' Edwards does not regard faith as 'the instrument wherewith the justifier acts in justifying, but wherewith the receiver of justification acts in accepting justification.'¹²⁹ That scripture sometimes promises eternal life as a result of virtue and obedience, Edwards writes, 'argues no more, than that there is a connection between them and evangelical obedience; which I have already observed is not the thing in dispute.'¹³⁰ 'All that can be proved by obedience and salvation being connected in the promise,' he continues, 'is that obedience and salvation are connected in fact'¹³¹ In other words, some degree of virtue is to be expected among the justified. No one Edwards is arguing with, as he himself notes, denies this.¹³² What he is debating is whether unregenerate persons have it in their own power to produce either the virtue, the sincere obedience, or the faith no one discounts is inseparable from justification. His principal opponents are those who do not regard granting human beings the ability to, say, repent on their own derogates from grace given that God's help is concurrently required.¹³³ There can't be a condition for justification, he counterargues, because that is what conversion means: to be turned and capacitated by God. '... [C]onversion is the condition of pardon and justification: but if it be so, how absurd is it to say that conversion is one condition of justification, and faith another; as though they were two distributively distinct and parallel conditions?'¹³⁴ The portion of the text from Romans 4:5 that seems particularly to draw his attention is that God 'justifieth the *ungodly*.'¹³⁵ If Christians could merely turn themselves to God and believe without God's assistance then neither would they need to be justified by God. Human emptiness of spiritual good, need for turning, and inability to turn, are manifest most powerfully for Edwards in the enmity to God implicit in our natural state. 'Mere natural reason,' for one

¹²⁹ *WJE* 19, 153.

¹³⁰ *WJE* 19, 208.

¹³¹ *WJE* 19, 208.

¹³² *WJE* 19, 208.

¹³³ *WJE* 19, 183.

¹³⁴ *WJE* 19, 223.

¹³⁵ *WJE* 19, 147; italics mine.

thing, ‘afforded no means by which we could come to the knowledge of this [justification]’¹³⁶ But not only do we lack knowledge of God we also lack desire for God. ‘[T]he abundance of [God’s] goodness [in justifying sinners] is then manifested, not only in flowing forth without anything extrinsic to put it forward [e.g., merit], but in overcoming great repulsion in the object.’¹³⁷ Not only, apparently, are human beings unable to achieve faith themselves if they should want to, they cannot even make themselves want faith without God first giving this ability.

But Edwards qualifies immediately and throughout the sermon-discourse that he is not precluding that a high degree of virtue is given together with justification. He makes it clear at the outset that the particular moment in the regenerative process in which he is interested is the moment right before justification takes place. The main animus of his argument is to demonstrate that ‘immediately before this act, God beholds him only as an ungodly or wicked creature; so that godliness in the person to be justified is not so antecedent to his justification as to be the ground of it.’¹³⁸ Edwards is unconcerned in this work with whatever gifts of grace come after the gift of conversion or what gifts are made possible by conversion. He explicitly states in the first section, ‘[i]f it be that with which, or which being supposed, a thing shall be, and without which, or it being denied, a thing shall not be, we in such a case call it a condition of that thing: but in this sense faith is not the only condition of salvation or justification, for there are many things that accompany and flow from faith, that are things with which justification shall be, and without which it will not be, and therefore are found to be put in Scripture in conditional propositions with justification and salvation in multitudes of places’¹³⁹ Among these things are ‘... “love to God,” and “love to our brethren,” “forgiving men their trespasses,” and many other good qualifications and acts.’¹⁴⁰ Edwards is just as clear leaving room for high degrees of virtue among the sanctified when he probes the inferences from the other end of the latter syllogism. Just as it does not prove that other things are not necessarily given together with faith to say that faith is necessarily given with justification, so does it not necessarily determine that these other things given with faith in the gift

¹³⁶ *WJE* 19, 239.

¹³⁷ *WJE* 19, 184.

¹³⁸ *WJE* 19, 147.

¹³⁹ *WJE* 19, 152.

¹⁴⁰ *WJE* 19, 152.

of justification are inextricably linked with it in conjoined causation. Edwards affirms, for instance, that sincere obedience is present with faith but present in a different manner than faith itself. 'Promises may rationally be made to signs and evidences of faith,' he writes, 'and yet the thing promised not be upon the account of the sign, but the thing signified.'¹⁴¹

When Edwards invokes such standard themes in the Reformed repertoire as 'justification is manifestly a *forensic* term,'¹⁴² one must therefore be careful to keep track of the particular polemical context in which it occurs in this work. It is helpful to remember, for instance, the stipulation that Edwards makes at the beginning of the discourse: in invoking the concept of imputed righteousness he is only speaking of that moment immediately prior to conversion. The concept of imputed righteousness also has a somewhat different meaning in the treatise than is commonplace elsewhere in the corpus. While he would certainly be able to find something to affirm in the humility of supposing that no human being achieves a level of virtue, even with grace, that would enable him or her to claim congruent merit of justification, he still emphasizes that not just faith but many things are necessarily connected with justification.¹⁴³ Neither is the 'righteousness of Christ ... [being] accepted for us, and admitted instead of that perfect inherent righteousness that ought to be in ourselves' used in the most common manner of signifying that the entirety of the regeneration process.¹⁴⁴ Edwards intends to use the concept 'in a stricter sense' than 'the expression is taken by our divines in a larger sense, for the imputation of all that Christ did and suffered for our redemption, whereby we are free from guilt, and stand righteous in the sight of God; and so implies the imputation both of Christ's satisfaction, and obedience.'¹⁴⁵ I believe we have some indication, then, of the concern that will manifest itself forcefully in the *Religious Affections*. Just because one feels oneself to be justified by means of faith, does not mean one is entitled to the comforts of assurance lacking the other qualities that normally accompany faith as the means of conveyance of justification.

¹⁴¹ *WJE* 19, 208.

¹⁴² *WJE* 19, 188; italics original.

¹⁴³ *WJE* 19, 153.

¹⁴⁴ *WJE* 19, 185–186.

¹⁴⁵ *WJE* 19, 185.

Justification, Sanctification and Perseverance in the 'Miscellanies'

Again, the goal of the following treatment of 'Miscellanies' entries is to see what support for the 'logic of virtue' I have been developing can be marshaled to resist the interpretation of Edwards's view of perseverance along Willard's 'compatibilist' lines or Lee's middle position between Thomas and Lombard (which is even less hospitable to my reading). It is a developmental treatment that seeks to show consistency of movement from a theological axis around divine sovereignty to one more amenable to each of the aspects of the 'logic of virtue' treated in the previous chapters. If my case is successful on such terms, we should find indications, first, that the level of sanctified charity must remain high if persons are to retain assurance of salvation. A high degree of virtue is also a part of the 'Thomist' version of Reformed views on perseverance (type iv), of course. So this is not sufficient. We should also find some indication of further convergence around the theme of charity as a quality that respects humans' endowment with a rational will as the foundation of secondary causality. I believe both sorts of evidence are forthcoming from the change of focus I will document between a select range of early- and mature-period 'Miscellanies' entries. Generally speaking, Edwards's discussion of the perseverance of the saints shifts from emphasizing, positively, that it is granted in the gift of faith itself—with the strong suggestion that what the perseverance of the saints is perseverance in is faith—to a negatively expressed view that it does not violate the doctrine of perseverance to make saints' continually striving for salvation a co-condition with grace. A wider range of later entries and major treatises that lend further support to this reading is given more detailed philosophical attention in Chapter 6 and the Conclusion.

From very early on Edwards entertained a conception of God's foreknowledge that did not preclude some features of contingency. It was only a contradiction, he argues in 'Miscellanies' No. 16, to regard God knowing something certainly and knowing it was contingent as well. It is not contradictory to suppose that God foreknows that an outcome is contingent.¹⁴⁶ Under such a stipulation, God presumably knows which conditions will contingently cause which possibilities to become

¹⁴⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 16, *WJE* 13, 208–209.

actualities. In ‘Miscellanies’ No. 29, Edwards seems to pull back from there being a ‘necessary’ relation between election, calling, justification, and everlasting glory. He prefers to use the term ‘harmonious’ to depict a logical state in between absolute and conditional decrees.¹⁴⁷ It is interesting to note that among the examples he gives of such a ‘harmonized’ relationship between decrees are human habits that have a certain natural telos but could, under some conditions, be frustrated. It is usually the case that ‘... when he [God] ... decrees prudence, he often decrees success’ but it seems equally open in the context of this entry that the latter decree will not come about.¹⁴⁸ By ‘Miscellanies’ No. 84, we nevertheless have a fairly standard assertion that ‘all that are elected shall undoubtedly be saved.’¹⁴⁹ The door of contingency in the matter of regeneration thus seems to be closed. What ‘threatenings of defection’ and ‘commands of earnest care’ there are operate alongside of this metaphysical certainty, in a manner highly consistent with ‘Thomistic’ compatibilism.¹⁵⁰ In a ‘Notes on Scripture’ entry on Mark 13:22 from this same early period, he asserts, ‘[i]f the election spoken of precedes their calling, then the doctrine of predestination is established; if it follows, and they are chosen for their Christianity, then the doctrine of perseverance is established, for ’tis impossible to seduce such, as is implied.’¹⁵¹ This metaphysical certainty is later affirmed in ‘Miscellanies’ No. 415. Once converted, Edwards assumes ‘’tis certain they shall persevere.’¹⁵²

At least a suggestion of conditionality within the *ordo salutis* nevertheless seems to be creeping back into ‘Miscellanies’ No. 428. ‘[T]he promise of acceptance is made only to a persevering sort of faith,’ he there stipulates, ‘and the proper evidence of its being of that sort is actual perseverance.’¹⁵³ It is short-lived, however, as ‘Miscellanies’ No. 668 reassures that ‘a right to eternal life, is not given in testimony of God’s pleasedness with anything that we do’¹⁵⁴ ‘Miscellanies’

¹⁴⁷ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 29, *WJE* 13, 216.

¹⁴⁸ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 29, *WJE* 13, 216.

¹⁴⁹ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 84, *WJE* 13, 249.

¹⁵⁰ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 84, *WJE* 13, 249.

¹⁵¹ ‘Notes on Scripture’ No. 34, *WJE* 15, 57; the dating is offered by Stein (‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 15, 44–45).

¹⁵² ‘Miscellanies’ No. 415, *WJE* 13, 474.

¹⁵³ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 428, *WJE* 13, 480.

¹⁵⁴ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 668, *WJE* 18, 212.

No. 669 further reassures that 'faith comprehends the whole of that by which we are justified'¹⁵⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 695 is a substantial extrapolation of the classic Reformed idea that '...God, when he had thus laid out himself to glorify his mercy and grace in the redemption of poor fallen men, did not see meet that those that are redeemed by Christ should be redeemed so imperfectly, as still to have the work of perseverance left in their own hands'¹⁵⁶ Edwards even stipulates that the foundation of perseverance is the imputation of Christ's righteousness: '[t]here is nothing to keep him off from the tree of life, to seal him to it, any longer; but as soon as ever a believer has ... [it], he has virtually finished the righteousness of the law.'¹⁵⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 711 further affirms that 'a believer's justification implies not only deliverance from the wrath of God, but a title of glory,' having already received justification 'as soon as ever we believe in him'¹⁵⁸ Far from supporting more autonomy to human agency than supportable in type (iv) perseverance, all of these entries place Edwards's position into the more narrow Calvinist portions of this position for which Lee and others argue.

'Miscellanies' No. 729 seems to mark at least a minor turning point, however. Edwards here insists it has not been understood that there is a distinction between regarding perseverance being necessary to salvation 'as a *sine qua non*, or as the way to possession' and perseverance being necessary to salvation 'even to the congruity of justification; and that not the less because a sinner is justified on his first act of believing, or because that perseverance is promised when once there has been one act of faith'¹⁵⁹ It is a highly subtle and abstract distinction; but we must appreciate its importance to him because he prefaces it with the observation that while perseverance has been regarded 'by Calvinian divines to be necessary to salvation ... the manner in which it is necessary has not been sufficiently set forth.'¹⁶⁰ I believe the distinction coincides with the crucial Edwardsean concept of 'meetness.' Ernest Benson Lowrie expresses the heart of the concept when unpacking what Willard called a *connex conditional covenantal promise*. 'Lacking commensu-

¹⁵⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 669, *WJE* 18, 213.

¹⁵⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 695, *WJE* 18, 276.

¹⁵⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 695, *WJE* 18, 281.

¹⁵⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 711, *WJE* 18, 340.

¹⁵⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 729, *WJE* 18, 355.

¹⁶⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 729, *WJE* 18, 353.

rability,' Lowrie stipulates, 'fulfillment of the condition in no way merits, earns, or deserves the fulfillment of the promised consequence.'¹⁶¹ 'A connex condition,' he continues, 'is simply "the way and means of conveyance, *by* and *in* which God gives the things which are promised, but not *for* which, and yet without which they are not given.'"¹⁶² Edwards seems to be expressing something quite similar to Willard's *connex conditional covenantal promise* in his insistence that the regenerate receive a benefit from Christ that is necessary for conversion without being autonomously created by the agent antecedently to the conversion. The burgeoning of this concept will be the locus of his move from a view of perseverance as more or less forensic to a view of perseverance that is both morally substantive and provisionally conditional. While in 'Miscellanies' No. 729 what is insisted upon as a definitive expression in a human life is still faith, for instance, in later entries this expression will more and more take the form of high degrees of virtue. It is clearly not a forensic conception of perseverance that Edwards has in mind when he describes grace as 'that which God implants in the heart against great opposition of enemies, great opposition from the corruption of the heart, and from Satan and the world.'¹⁶³ Whether it is faith or some more moral virtue like charity that is meant as what is persevering, what is going on in the actual human heart is that against which 'God manifests his all-conquering power' in the perseverance of grace against 'their continued efforts' of these enemies 'to root it out.'¹⁶⁴ In 'Miscellanies' No. 755, Edwards describes '[t]he Holy Spirit, who is the sum of all good' as the inheritance of the true convert.¹⁶⁵ That he stipulates it is only a 'little' of the Holy Spirit 'that they have in this life' would seem to indicate that he is open to fluctuations and imperfections of e.g., faith, hope and charity; but the drama of regeneration continues to take place on the actual landscape of the soul not merely between divine and demonic forces with the soul standing passively and forensically aside.

'Miscellanies' No. 790 seems to pivot on this turning point even more forcefully. For it is here that Edwards begins to find it impossible

¹⁶¹ Ernest Benson Lowrie, *The Shape of the Puritan Mind: The Thought of Samuel Willard* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 137; italics original.

¹⁶² *The Shape of the Puritan Mind*, 137; italics original. Lowrie cites as the primary sources for this quotation, Willard, *Covenant-Keeping, the Way to Blessedness* ... (Boston: James Glen, 1682), 5–12; and Willard, *The Child's Portion* ... (Boston: S. Green, 1684), 91.

¹⁶³ 'Miscellanies' No. 750, *WJE* 18, 398.

¹⁶⁴ 'Miscellanies' No. 750, *WJE* 18, 398.

¹⁶⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 755, *WJE* 18, 404.

to imagine justification as coming without a faith that manifests itself in obedience. Perseverance in trials becomes a part of the discussion of perseverance, or, 'cases wherein Christ and other things that are dear to the flesh stand in competition'¹⁶⁶ For the remainder of Edwards's career, he will stipulate that 'when FAITH is insisted on as the great CONDITION OF SALVATION, practical exertions and effective expressions of faith, appearing when faith is thus tried, are mainly pointed at.'¹⁶⁷ Nor are practical exertions merely stipulated as a sign—i.e., a sign which God could grant as means of conveyance not integrally related to the characterological make-up of the agent—they are also here invoked as a condition. The faithfulness and moral uprightness 'Hezekiah pleaded on his sickbed (Is. 38:3),' for instance, 'was not only a sign of his title to the fruits of God's favor, but was the condition of a title to them.'¹⁶⁸ 'Tis not only principles, but especially acts,' Edwards adds in 'Miscellanies' No. 800, 'that are the condition of salvation, for acts are the end of principles, and principles are in vain without 'em.'¹⁶⁹

It is interesting too that even the description of what Christ accomplished for human beings seems to undergo a transition of description. Together with the propitiation language of forensic benefits, we have an invocation of the moral excellency of suffering. '[T]he excellency of Christ mainly appears in what he did then; and the example he has set us in the amiable virtues he expressed, lies as much in what appeared in him in the time of his last sufferings, as his propitiation and righteousness.'¹⁷⁰ In entry No. 808, Edwards seems for the first time in the 'Miscellanies' to take seriously the idea of a failure to persevere. This is made all the more noticeable by the fact that he does not include the category of 'called by not chosen' in the discussion. He baldly states that 'believers being overthrown in their faith, or their [not] knowing Christ's voice and following him, is called a being plucked out of Christ's hand; and it is implied that the consequence would be their perishing.'¹⁷¹ Without suggesting that such commands violate the irrevocability of perseverance, Edwards nevertheless spends more than a page in 'Miscellanies' No. 840a discussing how the 'CONDITION OF

¹⁶⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 790, *WJE* 18, 479.

¹⁶⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 790, *WJE* 18, 485.

¹⁶⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 790, *WJE* 18, 486.

¹⁶⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 800, *WJE* 18, 500.

¹⁷⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 791, *WJE* 18, 488.

¹⁷¹ 'Miscellanies' No. 808, *WJE* 18, 511.

GOD'S PROMISES is often spoken of in Scripture as if it yet, in some sense, remained to be fulfilled after it is fulfilled.¹⁷² '[T]he apostle Paul, long after his conversion, yea, after his assurance of it, says that he kept under his body, lest he should be a castaway'¹⁷³ Just a few entries later Edwards begins to chip away at the once-and-for-all-ness of perseverance by discussing how 'REGENERATION OR CONVERSION' is 'a work that is in some respect often renewed, and in some respect continued through the whole life.'¹⁷⁴ This is the case even if the 'work is often spoken of as yet remaining to be sought and prayed for by the saints, after they are become saints.'¹⁷⁵

At this juncture in the notebook entries Edwards was evidently thinking about whether perseverance, once translated more forcefully into actual (as opposed to forensic) and moral (as opposed to fiduciary) habits, will remain at the same level or whether they can fluctuate. In 'Miscellanies' No. 847, he supposes that 'Christians, after they are converted, may still justly complain that they are blind, exceeding blind; they may complain still of gross darkness,' so much darkness, that 'the light God gives 'em from time to time is like the shining of the light out of darkness'¹⁷⁶ Toward the end of the entry, the corner is fully turned to this alternative conception of perseverance. For Edwards concludes that 'even justification itself does in a sense attend and depend upon these after-works of the Spirit of God upon the soul,' e.g., becoming 'as little children,' circumcising the heart, 'writing God's law on their hearts.'¹⁷⁷ '[I]f Christians cease to take care to persevere, that very thing is falling away.'¹⁷⁸ This spiritual truth applies also to angels. Late in the 'Miscellanies' entries, Edwards does not even exempt Jesus himself: 'if Christ had not kept the Father's commandments, he could not have continued in his love. He would have been cast out of favor.'¹⁷⁹ Fascinatingly, he regards it as impossible for Jesus to fall not because of metaphysical contradiction as second person of the trinity, but because '[h]e was entitled to such help and support from him as should be effec-

¹⁷² 'Miscellanies' No. 840a, *WJE* 20, 56.

¹⁷³ 'Miscellanies' No. 840a, *WJE* 20, 56. This theme is repeated in the 'Perseverance' section of the 'Controversies' notebook and in the sermon "The Character of Paul an Example to Christians" discussed later in this Chapter.

¹⁷⁴ 'Miscellanies' No. 847, *WJE* 20, 68.

¹⁷⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 847, *WJE* 20, 69.

¹⁷⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 847, *WJE* 20, 72.

¹⁷⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 847, *WJE* 20, 74.

¹⁷⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 946, *WJE* 20, 203.

¹⁷⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 1188, *WJE* 23, 108.

tual to uphold him in obedience to his Father.’¹⁸⁰ The latter distinction does not itself prove an autonomous will in Christ, of course. The scope of ‘effectual’ is ambiguous and could encompass the kind of infallible efficacy of God in type (iv) perseverance. What is telling, however, is that even in a passage citing the impossible of Christ’s falling, an opening is created for a substantial conception of human effort as a second cause.

Again, the firmest support for a rejection of type (iv) perseverance as Edwards’s position would come from trends in these ‘Miscellanies’ entries that corroborate the various components of the ‘logic of virtue’ the previous chapters have ventured to construct. We have seen the development of at least a moderately stronger insistence on the habitual ‘ingrainedness’ of charity than would be amenable to proponents of the first three types of views on perseverance discussed above. It is not ‘meet’ for those who lack the sanctified virtues indicative of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit to have God’s gift of justification. Obedience is part of the overall package of grace’s reception, taking root, and grateful application. If I admitted above that such a move is not by itself sufficient to displace the Willard-like reading of Edwards on perseverance, we also saw a turn in the ‘Miscellanies’ entries signaling a greater appreciation for the will as a secondary cause of grace. Edwards admits the possibility that converted saints can sometimes fail to perceive and honor Christ’s directives in their lives and grants that charity and/or faithfulness could fluctuate in converted saints to such an extent that returns to high levels of virtue constitute ‘renewals.’¹⁸¹ If God’s instituted means of grace are going to be efficacious, however, agents must give their full consent to the character traits they embody. Why is such consent necessary? Why, if charity has been achieved in at least in the manner of an occasional disposition, should consent still have to be maintained as a secondary cause of the persevering intent of God in conversion?¹⁸² It is because all human habits fail without intentionally persistent practice. Although especially in childhood it also must involve

¹⁸⁰ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1188, *WJE* 23, 108. The reader is referred to the Conclusion to see a fuller treatment of the discourse-length ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1354. While Edwards there devotes a good deal of attention to reasserting the doctrine of justification by faith, substantial effort is also applied to showing the integral relationship between faith and works.

¹⁸¹ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 847, *WJE* 20, 68; ‘Miscellanies’ No. 808, *WJE* 18, 511.

¹⁸² Again, Edwards distinguishes between occasional volitions and fixed habits (*WJE* 1, 307–308).

this too, habituation is anything but a mindless process of repeating things by rote. In order for an end to be ‘brought to pass in practice’ it must be ‘directed and commanded by the soul to be done.’¹⁸³ Edwards’s insistence that being ‘earnestly exhorted and pressed to care and caution and earnest endeavors to persevere’ is required for perseverance calls attention to precisely that aspect of consent to grace that is important to him for distinguishing the sanctified charity of ‘creatures capable of act and choice’ from the activity of machines (secondary causality).¹⁸⁴ The regenerative process must maintain the rational integrity of the connection between the inner workings of the human will and the outward action of the whole person. Reason and prudence, which determines what the occasion demands,¹⁸⁵ are at the heart of the purposive, telos-driven nature of the human activity that seeks some habits to be further ingrained and others to be rooted out of the character. Would-be saints who wish to persevere must, accordingly, make religion their primary ‘business.’ They must commit themselves to the practices that will further ingrain and expand the range of charitable dispositions. They must prudentially manage the diminution of contrary impulses and habits (the subject matter of Chapter 6). With the need for greater freedom, however, comes a greater openness to contingency.

Perseverance as a Convergence Point in the Edwardsean Corpus

As a theological crossroads in Protestant thought, the concept of perseverance is also a convergence point for the many strands in Edwards’s writings we have considered. It touches upon the question of the practical syllogism. How good does one have to be to continually be able to infer justification from sanctification? It touches upon the confluence of inherent and imputed righteousness. Does staying justified mean having a forensic acceptance mainly or does acceptance come with determinate characterological correlates? It touches upon the concept of secondary causes. If imputed righteousness shares the space of the regen-

¹⁸³ *WJE* 2, 422.

¹⁸⁴ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 945, *WJE* 20, 202; ‘Miscellanies’ No. 831, *WJE* 18, 545.

¹⁸⁵ Richard Sorabji, ‘Aristotle on the Role of Intellect in Virtue,’ in *Essays on Aristotle’s Ethics*, ed. Amelie O. Rorty (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1980), 216.

erate soul with inherent righteousness, what degree of independence from irresistible grace does the latter have? Accordingly, it touches on the matter of free will. We are now in a position to set down an inventory of why nineteenth- and twentieth-century tropes of neoorthodox and evangelical Calvinist dogmatics, despite showing some Edwardsean confluences, finally fail to trace the documentable trajectories that lead into the complex convergent point that is Edwards's seventeenth- and eighteenth-century context for thinking about the perseverance of the saints. In the provisional sketch I shall construct, perseverance in high levels of virtue is only awkwardly maintained directly and infallibly by God's grace. In Chapter 4 I argued that while Edwards regarded human beings as unfree to contribute meaningfully to the acquisition of sanctified charity—a divinely wrought conversion is necessary for this—he nevertheless sought to defend a certain minimal moral freedom for at least regenerate agents. This freedom was corroborated in some fashion by the discussion in Chapter 3 of a minimal form of 'autonomy' to the secondary causes of grace inhering within the creation and human beings as part of that creation. The conjoined force of these two ideas yields a possible construal of the saints' vulnerability to failure. If they do not take proper advantage of the grace infused in conversion and the ample means of grace instantiated in the created order, they can culpably fail to secure the requisite habitual charity indicative of perseverance.

The question we continue to struggle with, in short, is whether God *does* all that is necessary for continued perseverance or merely *provide* all that is necessary. Having given efficacious grace its due in the above sections, I now want to see what Edwardsean resources there are for recognizing the possibilities for contingent failure if those provisions are not utilized. As I have elsewhere, I shall take advantage of similarities in the structure of Nicolas Malebranche's ethics to fill in argumentative gaps where Edwards maintains an unhelpful silence. Two caveats are immediately necessary regarding his Roman Catholic doppelganger. First, the reader of Malebranche should not expect to find precise or even imprecise correlations between the occasionalism he defended in the arena of metaphysics and his views in the arena of ethics. That is a puzzle I can happily leave to Malebranche scholars. Second, even within the more narrow sphere of ethics, Edwards's adherence to a two-tiered Reformed metaphysics of reprobate and regenerate keeps at a considerable distance from Malebranche's view that there is some natural 'light,' e.g., of conscience, which all may consult for some appre-

hension of the divine order.¹⁸⁶ Nevertheless, preconceptions about what the theological dividing lines between Roman Catholicism and Calvinism have peremptorily squelched legitimate inquiry into the extent to which Edwards may have shared many details of philosophical apparatus with the French thinker.¹⁸⁷

To the extent that Malebranche has a doctrine of perseverance, which is only to a limited extent, it is on the basis of the nature of human beings as driven by the serial pursuit of whatever ends we think will yield happiness. Since our pursuing what we love cannot change, the only thing that could change a person who loves God with a habitual preference (a person who would thereby attain salvation) is if she were to begin to value something else more than God. '[I]n order that God might remain good in our regard and not become evil,' he advises, 'our love must always be conforming or similar to Divine love.'¹⁸⁸ This is certainly something short of a divine guarantee. There is a sense in which, theologically speaking, Malebranche is committed not only to the possibility of the justified falling from grace but the resistibility of grace as well. But to plausibly hold this view—it is more charitable to him to suppose that he reasoned consistently using certain creedal statements as touchstones than that he rigidly adhered to the precise manner of all creedal affirmations—he would have to give some account of how it could happen. It strikes me that he gives an account which makes it less, rather than more, likely. For if we are these kind of happiness-seeking creatures and resting in the peace of God's presence and pleasure is ever realized, as Malebranche says, 'the farther we are separated from God, the more we experience unhappiness.'¹⁸⁹ Instead, the internal logic of his position would seem to support more the second component of the dual possibilities he imagines. 'On the other hand, the blessed, for a similar reason, cannot cease loving God.'¹⁹⁰ I aspire to read Edwards in these same charitable terms: namely, taking the time to get a feeling for the logic of his own internal argumentation rather than subsuming his reasoning to a preconceived concep-

¹⁸⁶ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 57.

¹⁸⁷ The most thorough treatment of the connection between Edwards and Malebranche remains Charles J. McCracken, *Malebranche and British Philosophy* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), 329–340; though see also, Fiering, Jonathan Edwards's Moral Thought, 341–345.

¹⁸⁸ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 159.

¹⁸⁹ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 158.

¹⁹⁰ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 158.

tion of where he ought to be creedally. Just what threshold of human autonomy splits the difference between that part made possible by conversion and persevering grace and that part made possible by natural virtues such as fortitude and prudence developed in a precarious world of human contingency should be left as a matter of philosophical analysis and theological context from text to text. Those passages more suggestive of possible failures in true saints should not be discounted or presumed slips of an otherwise orthodox tongue. Mistakes in judgment of salvific status can always be made.¹⁹¹ Some of those putative saints who fail to persevere are only mistakenly included within the visible church in the first place.¹⁹² Edwards's insistence that 'they that fall away, and cease visibly to ... [walk in newness of life], 'tis a sign they never were risen with Christ' in the *Religious Affections* is repeated in the portion of the 'Perseverance' section of the 'Controversies' notebook dated between the late 1730s and the early 1740s.¹⁹³ Still, a converted person who fails to persevere in 'visible sainthood,' whose engagement with the ordained order of creation and institutions of the church fails to maintain the habitual charity indicative of true discipleship, must by the best of human lights be regarded as currently among the reprobate.

The logic of Edwards's ethical thought seems to require an openness to at least the possibility that persons who are once able to infer justification from sanctification (*via* the practical syllogism) could subsequently fall below the threshold of virtue on which basis they could continue to infer it.¹⁹⁴ Because the saved state encompasses charity

¹⁹¹ *WJE* 2, 182. In the *Religious Affections*, Edwards cautioned against expecting infallibility in the even the best tests of true godliness, i.e., persistent Christian practice (*WJE* 2, 193–197). At least a formal recognition of these concerns remain in the ecclesiastical writings (*WJE* 12, 291–299; see also Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 83). Edwards recognizes, for example, that people might be mistaken about their deepest motivations (*WJE* 12, 212–213, 221, 414, 431). Nevertheless, he suggests that in the final analysis it is easier to judge between the godly and the ungodly than it is to judge between the morally sincere and the morally insincere. This is because of the more intricate gradations of meaning in sincerity when compared with the 'all or nothing' criteria posed by the difficulty of being a 'disciple indeed' (*WJE* 12, 261–262, 299, 492–493).

¹⁹² *WJE* 12, 237. Citing 1 John 2:19, Shepard uses this as an explanation as well (Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins, Works*, Vol. 2, 358).

¹⁹³ *WJE* 2, 391; 'Perseverance,' 'Controversies' notebook, 107. Again, I wish to thank Kenneth Minkema for help with the dating of this manuscript.

¹⁹⁴ John Goodwin, the divine Owen spills so much ink criticizing in his massive treatment of perseverance, seems to have held something like this view (Owen, *The Doctrine of the Saints' Perseverance*, 418). 'We find,' Owen purports Goodwin to write, '... many promises of ... [true believers'] perseverance, but all of them conditional, and such whose performance, in respect of actual and complete perseverance, is suspended upon

as an ingrained habit, and because like any other habit charity is strengthened or diminished through the exercise of a degree of freedom, the maintenance of the saved state also remains partially dependent upon factors inhering with the human characterological structure. Two sources bearing on perseverance can provide a corroborative link between these two suppositions, the multi-text correspondences documented in the last four chapters, the developmental sketch of the 'Miscellanies' just outlined, and the alternatives to the standards readings of the 'Treatise on Grace' and 'Justification By Faith Alone' I offered above. The nexus of all of these confluences is the concept of 'meetness.' If it is the case that the regenerate cannot but have high degrees of the habits associated with 'visible sainthood,' forensic accounts of imputed righteousness lose some of their power to weaken attendant concepts of secondary causality and free will. This is not to say that Edwards ceases to comport with Calvinist mainstays on the necessity of grace to direct the human will to the good.¹⁹⁵ The habit of charity on which the practical syllogism is based is indeed built up by the perpetual reinvigoration of the Holy Spirit's indwelling against the downward trajectory of fallen human nature.¹⁹⁶ My point is rather that the dichotomizing motifs of Calvinism and the moral sense in the scholarship on Edwards's ethics has yet to capture his precise means of correlating the integrity of the human frame as a secondary cause of grace and God's primary causality.

Although as far as I know it has never been explored in the Edwards literature, one explicit statement of Edwards's views on the perseverance of the saints, an early sermon entitled 'The Character of Paul an Example to Christians,' seems to uphold a sharp division between the one-time experience of conversion and final perseverance.¹⁹⁷ 'The apostle knew that though he was converted, yet there remained a great work

the diligent and careful use of means by men to persevere' (*ibid.*, 532). Owen, again, regards God to provide the means of this suspension in the conditions of the covenant.

¹⁹⁵ *Institutes*, II, iv, 14. Through the conversion experience come (i) the personal presence of God constituted by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, (ii) appreciation for the 'lively emblems' of the spiritual order inscribed by God in the natural order, as well as a full appreciation for (iii) the ordinary means of grace implicit in the institutions of the church, e.g., the preaching of the Word and sacraments.

¹⁹⁶ 'Images of Divine Things' No. 115–117; 'Notes on Scripture' No. 475.

¹⁹⁷ 'The Character of Paul an Example to Christians' is one of four sermons on Phil. 3:17 under the general title 'We ought to follow the good example of the Apostle Paul' dated from February, 1740 ('Appendix: Dated Sermons, January 1739–December 1742,' *WJE* 22, 540).

that he must do, in order to his salvation. ...And therefore,' Edwards writes, 'he did not seek salvation the less earnestly, for his having hope and assurance, but a great deal more.'¹⁹⁸ Such a profile of Paul seems open to some degree of contingency. Edwards's further qualification, '... though God will keep men that are converted from damnation, yet this is the means by which he will keep them from it; *viz.* he will keep them from a wicked life,'¹⁹⁹ nevertheless seems to bring his position into line with Owen's (type iii) position. Wittingly or unwittingly, however, when describing the manner in which God keeps the converted from failures in perseverance, Edwards seems to align himself even in this early sermon more with a conception of perseverance that preserves the human will as a secondary cause of grace than with a conception of grace's irresistibility that minimizes secondary causality.²⁰⁰ For Edwards offers a still further qualification of his previous assertion that God will keep the converted from a wicked life: '... yet this is one means by which he will keep them from it, *viz.* by their own caution to avoid damnation, and by his threatenings of damnation if they should live a wicked life.'²⁰¹ Threatening is a mode of divine interaction that is eminently compatible with the human will as a secondary cause of grace.

The majority of entries in the first two folio pages of the 'Perseverance' section of the 'Controversies' notebook, seek to explain how the new dispensation of the New Testament reveals a more accurate conception of perseverance without thereby discounting the Old Testament

¹⁹⁸ 'The Character of Paul an Example to Christians,' in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, A.M., with an essay of his genius and writings by Henry Rogers: and a memoir by Sereno E. Dwight*, revised and corrected by Edward Hickman (London: Ball, Arnold and co., 1840), Vol. 2, 857. On the theme of the reasonableness of exhortations to earnestly endeavor to do what is required for perseverance even after perseverance has been promised, this sermon corresponds fairly directly to 'Miscellanies' entry 945. The latter probably dates between 1742 and mid-1743 (Pauw, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 19, 38).

¹⁹⁹ 'The Character of Paul an Example to Christians,' *Works*, Vol. 2, 857; italics original.

²⁰⁰ Calvin, for his part, severely restricts the concept of cooperative grace: '[i]f they mean that after we have by the Lord's power once for all been brought to obey righteousness, we go forward by our own power and are inclined to follow the action of grace, I do not gainsay it. ... Yet if they mean that man has in himself the power to work in partnership with God's grace, they are most wretchedly deluding themselves' (*Institutes* II, iii, 11; McNeill, ed., 306). Translating the Greek text of 1 Corinthians, Calvin clarifies that Paul '... does not say that grace was a fellow worker with him; but that the grace that was present with him was the cause of everything' (*Institutes*, II, iii, 12; McNeill, ed., 306).

²⁰¹ 'The Character of Paul an Example to Christians,' *Works*, Vol. 2, 857; italics original.

paradigms. As part of this program, perseverance is clearly asserted as a metaphysical root deep in the structure of saints whose practice may not be visibly distinct from non-saints. The explanation that those who do not persevere *ipso facto* were never saints to begin with is also employed, an explanation that would seem to preclude any conditions of falsifiability. However, toward the end of this first batch of entries from the early 1740s, a solitary entry begins to explore a modality of perseverance with significantly greater range for secondary causality and a substantive conception of salvific virtue. Edwards refers to another notebook as relating to ‘How Persons may be required to use Endeavours & means for that which is yet promised and already certain.’²⁰² This becomes a prominent theme in the second two folio pages of the ‘Perseverance’ section dated from the early 1750s. The examples of Paul and Christ are mentioned here comparably with the 1740 sermon i.e., exhortations to take care to persevere are offered even though they knew that this was already certain because promised.²⁰³ Few of the short, fragmentary excerpts in either the early section or the later section show much development. But there is a suggestive late-career assertion of the impossibility of failure together with the use of ‘means Endeavors Care & ... Labour’ that mirrors the concept of ‘meetness’ appearing with greater frequency in middle-career to late-career ‘Miscellanies’ entries. This assertion requires a more finely grained analysis of the compossibilities of secondary causality, God’s efficient grace as primary cause of salvation, and human freedom. But without suggesting that Edwards could globally adopt Molina’s conception of grace as applied wholly external to the will, I will build on the debate between Molina, sixteenth-century Thomists, and Reformed commentators on middle knowledge outlined in Chapter 3 to suggest that there is a dimension of externality to Edwards’s conception of grace that Lee misses in placing him at the edge of ‘Thomist’ compatibilism bordering on Lombard’s conception of increased grace.

‘Thomist’ compatibilism encompasses a wide range of specific positions on the relationship between nature and grace, between inherent and imputed righteousness, as well as between secondary causes and God’s grace as first cause. The particular variable I want to isolate here

²⁰² ‘Perseverance,’ ‘Controversies Notebook,’ 108; *Works of Jonathan Edwards* Office document.

²⁰³ ‘Perseverance,’ ‘Controversies Notebook,’ 109, 111; *Works of Jonathan Edwards* Office document.

is the modality of the infallibility of God's persevering will. The opposition between Thomas and Molina outlined in Chapter 3 provides a basic frame. For Thomas, God's means of ensuring the chosen agent will persevere is that the will is turned and kept turned in such a way that grace is wanted and sin is not wanted. There is a way this could happen that does not also include a stipulation that human freedom is maintained; but it is hallmark of Thomas's position that irresistible grace is affirmed as compatible with human freedom. Grace is no less infallibly rendered by Molina's God; it is just ensured by God's infallibly correct knowledge about what kind of offer of grace it is to which a given human being would respond positively. God's will cannot but come to pass, but it comes to pass in such a way that the boundaries of human agency are never crossed at all. Again, let me clear that I think Edwardsean conversion does not allow globally for the Molinist position. For Edwards, human capacities are fallen and need to be fundamentally reoriented by a grace that is irresistible if God is to be both known and loved above all else. But Edwards's answer to how this state is maintained is more complex than scholars have allowed. Some of the causality behind the maintenance of the habit of sanctified charity surely remains internal to the will. The Holy Spirit continues to indwell within the regenerate and with this indwelling presumably comes some interaction with the will. But the strong insistence upon the meetness of God granting salvation to the persons who have the virtues indicative of salvation, when paired with the secondary causality the human will retains with the dignity of being created rational, must give pause to any assumption that this is the only modality whereby God's infallible persevering will obtains. The concept of inherent righteousness discussed at length in Chapter 2 means that some of what charity is—in marked contrast to Lombard's position—inheres within humans in the sense that it is partly at their disposal to act upon or not. The passage cited above from Willard stipulates that what it means for even a highly subordinated second cause to count as a real human will with rationality is that it 'has a power of self motion'²⁰⁴ What I propose is wrong with Lee's model of more Lombard-like compatibilism—where human freedom retains even less a conceptual space from irresistible grace than in Thomas's account—is that it does not allow for there being two modes of perseverance up and running at the same time:

²⁰⁴ Willard, *A Complete Body of Divinity*, 459.

a first kind embodying the perduring transformation wrought by God directly in conversion and a second kind (discussed in connection with Van Mastricht in Chapter 3) embodying some indirect grace in the post-conversion continuation of charity. The second kind includes the willing, consenting, loving, praying and reflecting that helps to maintain the sensibilities directly created by the one-time reorienting vision of divinely-wrought conversion. Reducing this second modality of perseverance to the first makes nonsense out of the long Reformed tradition of respecting second causes (discussed in Chapter 3) and the discourse of 'meetness' in the Edwardsean corpus.

It would be overstating the case to say that all true saints persevere in actual righteousness not because God necessarily brings it about but instead because the vices they developed prior to conversion were not sufficient to impinge upon the disposition of charity they attained after conversion, because the natural virtues they developed prior to conversion were sufficient to counteract what vices they did develop, because they were particularly strong-willed, or because they enjoyed the support of an extremely rarified church community. But even though we don't know what Edwards's precise views were concerning the relationship between the first modality of perseverance and the second modality, the case for his occasionalism and/or Lombard-infused compatibilism remains overstated. Nor can it be objected that emphasizing human freedom as a second cause of perseverance to the maximum extent possible under a compatibilism—Edwards cannot be moved beyond a compatibilist frame entirely because of the continued indwelling of the Holy Spirit—disallows Edwards's clear intent to affirm a Reformed sense of perseverance as necessary for the elect. Even if in this possibility, however, Edwards does not hold Shepard's view that the means of grace are certainly used efficaciously to their full telos by the elect and 'the best hypocrite, being never appointed certainly to come to this end, ever fails in the use of means' where, 'he is and shall be forsaken of God, and forsake God.'²⁰⁵ The force of *moral* necessity in the saints' perseverance ought not be underestimated.²⁰⁶ For even if consent to the continuance of regenerate charity is contingent upon human freedom in a logical sense, it was noted in Chapter 4 that, morally speaking, it might well be that the truly con-

²⁰⁵ Shepard, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins, Works*. Vol. 2, 240.

²⁰⁶ I again refer to the distinction between moral and natural necessity made in *Freedom of the Will* (*WJE* 1, 151–152, 308, 364, 405–406).

verted person would always grant such consent. The point embodies the distinction between *in sensu composito* and *in sensu diviso* William Lane Craig notes in connection with differing schools of Molinism. '[T]he notion of congruent grace,' argues Craig, 'does not mean grace which *cannot* be rejected by the created will, but grace which is so suited to the created will that were it to be offered, it *would not* be rejected.'²⁰⁷ Those who once manage with God's help to secure the highly ingrained virtuous habits indicative of sanctification might well find it impossible to fall out of this state.²⁰⁸ Their wills might then be said to be 'determined' toward virtuous habits the way the reprobate's wills were determined towards vice. What I want to highlight is that even though the impossibility would not be guaranteed by metaphysics as in types (i) through (iv) of our Reformed views of perseverance, it can be no less infallible for that. Even if it is based on the moral necessity of loving God above all things once one has come to love God this way, it is no less fit to serve as a foundation for Edwards's confidence that '... there is an Essential difference between the Faith & seeming Grace of such ... professors as fall away & such as Persevere even before ... <any> distinction appears ... as to Perseverance or while both retain ... their Religion'²⁰⁹ Even if perseverance is mostly assured through the sensibilities created by the original bestowal of the love of God in conversion, this does not mean that the redemption of Christ '... brought us no further than the state in which we were at first, and left us as liable to fall as before' so that 'all this redemption might be made void, and come to nothing.'²¹⁰ For who, Edwards reasons with Malebranche, having seen how far above ordinary enjoyment the enjoyment of God's nature is would turn back to predominantly love earthly goods on their own terms?²¹¹

²⁰⁷ William Lane Craig, "Lest anyone should fall" A middle knowledge perspective on perseverance and apostolic warnings,' *International Journal for Philosophy of Religion* 29 (1991): 71; italics original.

²⁰⁸ Compare the denial of Cocceius that grace can be habitual and/or exercised in this regard (*Summa Theologiae ex Scriptura repetita* [Amsterdam, 1665], XLIX, 1; cited in Heppie, *Reformed Dogmatics*, 584; pt. 6).

²⁰⁹ 'Perseverance,' 'Controversies Notebook,' 107, *Works of Jonathan Edwards* manuscript. The ellipses call attention to various words that have been either crossed out in the original manuscript or contemporary editing comments made within brackets by the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* staff.

²¹⁰ 'Grace Never Overthrown,' *WJE* 8, 346.

²¹¹ Paul Ramsey, 'Appendix V: Defying and Assisting the Spirit,' *WJE* 8, 754; italics original.

CHAPTER SIX

CHURCH COMMUNITY AS PROVIDENTIAL AND PRUDENTIAL

Sharpening the Distinguishing Features of Those ‘In Favor With God’

We have seen that principal among Edwards’s intellectual concerns was identifying the distinguishing features of those ‘in favor with God.’ Such a concern is continuous with Cambridge Platonist Henry More’s conception of increased levels of virtue accompanying increased levels of participation in God’s nature. It is equally consistent with the perfectionistic edge of the Reformed tradition Gisbert Voetius carved out in defending precisionism and which, at least in places, Theophilus Gale seemed to adopt in adapting Platonic and Neoplatonic ideas into a Reformed ‘metaphysics of goodness.’¹ We shall see in the present chapter that it is also consistent with William Perkins’s concern with the distempers of conscience that arise from overscrupulousness and lassitude in the discerning of assurance of salvation. It is less consistent with Calvin’s affirmation that sanctification is given in a fundamentally real but still unspecified degree with the gift of justifying faith.

The range of questions that needs to be asked to demarcate the intersections, contradictions and compossibilities between these concerns is wide indeed. It requires us to inquire, for instance, into the *nature* of this distinctive quality. Is it of a spiritual nature? If so, how is its distinctiveness perceived? One of the ways of making this judgment more tangible is to locate its distinctiveness in some kind of moral activity. We have seen that this move need not take an ‘Arminian’ course. The distinctive quality of love could be conceived as an enhancement of human nature made possible by an unmerited participation in the divine nature. Human beings blessed by God could then be seen to be godlike in their ability to love. But if this distinctive quality of the saints

¹ Theophilus Gale, *The Court of the Gentiles. Part IV Of Reformed Philosophie. Wherein Plato’s Moral, and Metaphysic of Prime Philosophie is reduced to an useful Forme and Method* (London: Printed by J. Macocke, for Thomas Cockeril, 1677), 103.

is of a moral nature beyond its spiritual nature, what, in turn, would the precise nature of 'god-like love' be? How far, for instance, would its demands go beyond the 'ordinary' goodness non-saints could be said to achieve? How much do ordinary human non-moral qualities remain in the saint? Going too far into the territory of infusion or indwelling to embracing a 'god-like' saintly virtue subsequently raises the classic concerns about monism, e.g., merging with God's essence.² The further one pulls back from this radical form of the virtue distinctive of saints, however, it becomes more difficult to separate saintly love from the more ordinary loves practiced by the unregenerate.

If in Chapter 2 we sought to answer some of these questions surrounding the nature of the virtues indicative of salvation, we have not yet given sustained attention to the matter of their *acquisition* and *maintenance*. In this chapter we give more detailed attention to how, building on the conception of secondary causality from Chapter 3 and applying the FOLD_f established in Chapter 4, would-be saints move from conversion to the visibly habitual charity on which basis they could infer assurance of salvation via the practical syllogism. Edwards's biography of the itinerant missionary David Brainerd occupies the first half. As the most extended case study in the Edwardsean corpus, is an invaluable source of detail on the very human failures involved in making good on God's offer of grace. Edwards's considerable writings on church membership comprise the second half of the chapter and present a corroborating picture of Edwards as concerned with how community can help or hinder the process whereby the regenerate seek to maintain the high levels of virtue by which, in turn, they may continue to garner assurance of salvation.

² George S. Claghorn notes of a draft of an unpublished letter to an unknown respondent to the *Religious Affections* that '[t]here is no reason to believe that Edwards was denying creation or holding to the neo-Platonic view of emanation' (George S. Claghorn, 'Introduction to the Related Correspondence,' *WJE* 8, 632). Claghorn suggests that the letter represents a forceful response of Edwards to the misguided charge of pantheism or monism (*ibid.*, 631). For his part, Edwards forcefully defends his use of concepts such as emanation, communication, and participation against the charge of heterodoxy: '[a]nd this is that in his nature which he communicates something of to the saints, and therefore is called by divines in general a communicable attribute; and the saints are made partakers of his holiness, as the Scripture expressly declares (Heb. 12:10), and that without imparting to them his essence' (Edwards, 'Unpublished Letter on Assurance and Participation in the Divine Nature,' *WJE* 8, 639).

David Brainerd: Hagiography as Soteriology and Casuistry

David Brainerd was a missionary to Native Americans in New England from roughly 1743 to 1747. Except for intermittent residency during 1745 at a mission he established in what is now central New Jersey, he preached itinerantly across the wide expanse of unincorporated frontiersland bordered by the Delaware on the southeast, the Hudson on the northeast, and the Connecticut on the northwest.³ Edwards regarded Brainerd as a figure who exemplified the qualitative difference between true evangelical fervor and semblances ‘that in a little time wither up, and drop off, and rot under the trees.’⁴ When Brainerd visited Edwards on May 28, 1747, Iain H. Murray regards them as ‘comparative strangers, having met only once before at the Yale Commencement of 1743.’⁵ Edwards’s daughter Jerusha, who was caring for him in his consumption, was further to be the ‘one of this family [that] should go with him, and be helpful to him in his weak and low state.’⁶ At any rate, Brainerd left the home of another friend to be attended by Edwards and his family prior to his eventual death from the disease. After Jerusha also succumbed, Edwards interrupted his engagement with the hotly debated ‘communion controversy’ and postponed commencing his famous treatise on freedom of the will to publish a biography based on Brainerd’s diaries.⁷

As Edwards provides substantial commentary in his preface, in his conclusion, as well as intermittently throughout, the work is not merely a biographical summary. Brainerd’s case also should be seen to enter into Edwards’s developing views on the process of attaining assurance of salvation after conversion and *vice versa*.⁸ But Brainerd is a good

³ Norman Pettit, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 7, 1–2. Pettit makes the significant observation that itinerant preaching may have been forced upon him because of his failure to secure his college degree; ‘... he continued to hope,’ Pettit notes, ‘that he could gain the full credentials needed for a settled ministry’ (‘Prelude to Mission: Brainerd’s Expulsion from Yale,’ *New England Quarterly* LIX, No. 1 [March 1986]: 42).

⁴ Pettit, ‘Prelude to Mission,’ 31; *WJE* 2, 185.

⁵ Iain H. Murray, *Jonathan Edwards: A New Biography* (Carlisle, Penn.: Banner of Truth Trust, 1987), 300.

⁶ *WJE* 7, 447.

⁷ Pettit, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 7, 10–11; George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 320–340.

⁸ For a contrary view of Brainerd’s importance for understanding Edwards’s thought see David L. Weddle, ‘The Melancholy Saint: Jonathan Edwards’s Interpretation of David Brainerd as a Model of Evangelical Spirituality,’ *Harvard Theological Review* 81, No. 3 (1988): 297–318.

case study for students of Edwards not only for what it reveals about regularities in this process but for what might be called his abnormal moral psychology as well. Without challenging the accepted notion that Brainerd was important to Edwards as an exemplary saint, I believe it is precisely the anomalies in Brainerd's record that makes Edwards's choice of him as exemplar so instructive.⁹ Brainerd's 'melancholy' substantially complicated the self-regulated task of ingraining charity.¹⁰ Gracious affections are attended with a more or less permanent change of character;¹¹ but day after day, page after page, we see Brainerd's continued despair concerning the persistent feeling that God had abandoned him.¹² The manner in which Brainerd's melancholia 'stifle[d] the motions of God's spirit' accentuates both what (augmented) natural powers converted agents need to bring to the regenerative process and why these powers might nevertheless be insufficient without a community of fellow travelers who have reached the common destination of assurance under trials.¹³

Heretofore, few commentators have posited strong connections between Edwards's willingness to take on Brainerd's diaries and the controversy he was having with his congregation over the requirements for church membership.¹⁴ Most recently, George Marsden connects reli-

⁹ Weddle instead regards Brainerd as 'at best, an ambiguous example of Edwards's theology of religious experience' ('The Melancholy Saint,' 298) that 'bestowed a mixed blessing on subsequent generations of evangelicals who were not so skillful in distinguishing the pathology of depression from the grace of melancholy' (ibid., 318). Murray holds that 'Edwards does not idealize Brainerd' but was instead 'aware of a brooding introspection' and did not commend his example 'uncritically' (Murray, *Jonathan Edwards*, 308).

¹⁰ This point is discussed by Weddle ('The Melancholy Saint,' 300).

¹¹ *WJE* 2, 341.

¹² Weddle, 'The Melancholy Saint,' 300–303.

¹³ *WJE* 7, 112.

¹⁴ Weddle affirms that Brainerd's 'example of the awakened disposition manifesting itself in visible charity supported Edwards's position in his struggle with his Northampton parishioners over qualifications for admission to communion' ('The Melancholy Saint,' 299), but does not develop the connection. William J. Danaher, Jr. has suggested that through his friendship with Brainerd Edwards was exposed to the 'Scottish pattern' of administering the Lord's Supper ('By Sensible Signs Represented: Jonathan Edwards' Sermons on the Lord's Supper,' *Pro Ecclesia* 8, No. 3 [Summer 1998]: 271). Danaher argues that this pattern is conceptually related to Edwards's desire to restrict the Lord's Supper to the regenerate (ibid., 270–271, 287); but notes several differences and concludes that 'Edwards no doubt contributed more to the conversation than he gained' (ibid., 272). In affirming that Edwards's change views on the Lord's Supper should be seen as 'an outgrowth of his developing concept of the nature of religious experience,' R. David Rightmire denies that it has to do with 'practicality, purity, or

gious affections with ecclesiology disputes and with Brainerd's case but not Brainerd's case with ecclesiological disputes.¹⁵ Norman Pettit affirmed that *Life of Brainerd* and *A Humble Inquiry* were closely linked in Edwards's life and notes that Edwards wanted to use *Life of Brainerd* in some fashion during the controversy; but concludes that it is difficult to discern his precise intentions.¹⁶ In any case, the biography is most commonly connected as both Pettit and Marsden both primarily do, with Edwards's writings on the revivals.¹⁷ The amplification of the logic of virtue we have been documenting, however, suggests a much closer connection between Edwards's moral psychology, soteriology, and ecclesiology. If part of Edwards did indeed regard humans as to some degree free to lose the habits indissolubly linked to salvation, this may well need to be weighed in among the reasons why he so uncompromisingly aligned himself with a conception of visible sainthood out of synch with the trajectory of eighteenth-century Congregationalism. Edwards had discussed at length in the *Religious Affections* how both ordinary foibles and more extraordinary psychic aberrations in the unregenerate could mirror truly religious affections. But whether or not the necessity of maintaining a putatively 'pure' church community is actually linked to his thoughts on the dramatic young missionary, it is not until he faced Brainerd 'in the wilderness,' melancholy and imprudent in his distaste for community,¹⁸ that Edwards fully faced the manner in which ordinary foibles and more extraordinary psychic aberrations could confound the assurance of salvation of the properly converted. The discussion that follows will seek to isolate the crucial functioning of two ethico-religious virtues in this process, discernment and prudence.

Edwards's rendition of Brainerd's diaries follow a fairly standard Puritan hagiographic formula. That is to say, it documents the progress

church polity' ('The Sacramental Theology of Jonathan Edwards in the Context of Controversy,' *Fides et Historia* XXI, No. 1 [January 1989]: 59). As my argument unfolds, it will become apparent that I affirm it has to do with all three of these factors.

¹⁵ Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 330–331, 352–353.

¹⁶ Pettit, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 7, 14–16. Pettit indeed seems more interested in the effect of Edwards on Brainerd's ecclesiology than Brainerd's effect on Edwards's ecclesiology.

¹⁷ Pettit, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 7, 5. John F. Jamieson concurs and adds Edwards's concerns to refute Arminianism and conjoining cause ('Jonathan Edwards's Change of Position on Stoddardeanism,' *Harvard Theological Review*, 74, No. 1 [1981]: 80–99).

¹⁸ For a helpful account of what Edwards was likely to have intended in the term 'melancholy,' see Weddle 'The Melancholy Saint,' 300, 312–315.

from initial conversion to lasting assurance of salvation. Edwards clearly sees his subject as having had a conversion experience. The 'peak experience' of conversion is the vision of God, the reorienting insight or perception that expands the hierarchy of goods the person had hitherto conceived and pursued.¹⁹ As noted in Chapter 5, Edwards unequivocally holds the view of Malebranche before him on the absolute dependence of the cultivation of virtue on God's unmerited bestowal of the indwelling Holy Spirit. In order to break beyond the valuative and volitional boundaries of self-love and enter into the love of the divine nature for its own sake God has to make the divine nature a possibility of valuation.²⁰ And Brainerd reports that God 'brought ... [him] to a hearty disposition to exalt him and set him on the throne, and principally and ultimately to aim at his honor and glory as King of the universe.'²¹ A new set of practices, responsibilities and joys also opens as a result of this experience. Brainerd's remarks that '[i]t was widely different from all the conceptions ... ever ... [he] had had of God' and that he 'never had seen before anything comparable to it for excellency and beauty' seem to meet these Edwardsean criteria.²² There is a new sensitivity to semblances of piety as well. The converted agent sees that even what he or she regarded as sanctified actions prior to conversion may have been performed for gain and self-aggrandizement instead.²³ It is further to be expected that the converted agent will feel so attracted by the newly perceived divine object, 'so captivated and delighted with the excellency, loveliness, greatness, and other perfections of God,' as to be wholly 'swallowed up' in God.²⁴ But seeing new possibilities in the vision of God is not the same thing as realizing its new goals or possessing its new habits in any lasting way.²⁵ The power of preexistent habits remains. The new love of God for God's own sake,

¹⁹ *WJE* 12, 211.

²⁰ Nicolas Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics* (1684), translation with an introduction by Craig Walton (Boston: Kluwer Academic, 1993), 64–65.

²¹ *WJE* 7, 139 (second column).

²² *WJE* 7, 138 (second column).

²³ In this vein, Brainerd writes '[m]ethought I saw a stately house, a very beauteous building, and I had been heaping up dirt, filth, and rubbish against the foreside of it supposing I was doing the building some service, but when I saw that what I had been heaping up by the side of it cleaved off from it and did not in the least measure touch it, and so consequently could not possibly answer the end I thought I proposed, which was in part the advantage and strengthening of it' (*WJE* 7, 134–135).

²⁴ *WJE* 7, 139 (second column).

²⁵ *WJE* 12, 215.

the desire to eradicate all contrary impulses and habits, the desire to serve in the advancement of God's kingdom and glory, and perhaps also the evangelical impulse to help others achieve the same fulfillment, all of these immediately after conversion are what in *Freedom of the Will* Edwards called *occasional* motives or desires.²⁶ Though the ingrained habit of charity was absent *in toto* prior to conversion, it is not given *in toto* subsequent to conversion.²⁷ In order to claim assurance of salvation, Brainerd would have to establish that he had sufficient sanctification to infer justification *via* the practical syllogism.

As discussed in Chapter 1, Puritans were exhorted to subject their dominant concerns, motivations and general inner workings to intense examination, and only if the sensibilities and affections indicative of holy living were discerned over an extended period of time could they regard themselves as justified.²⁸ 'Sainthood,' Michael McGiffert observes in connection with Thomas Shepard, 'was ... rather a process than a settled condition God's first caress was not enough For the saint who strove to grow in grace ... each fresh conversion yielded great dividends of assurance and reconfirmed the order of experience on which the saint's psychological stability depended.'²⁹ Whereas, according to McGiffert, 'Shepard nowhere develops a formal psychology of the emotions, and his record of his own fluctuating feelings is anything but intellectually strict,'³⁰ we have seen that Edwards's use of the practical syllogism is determinate if not explicit in the *Religious Affections*. Consideration of the *Two Dissertations* gave still further detail as to the uniqueness of the motive-structure of sanctified charity: the vision of God is a temporary breaking free of the conceptual and moral bonds

²⁶ *WJE* 1, 160. On Augustine's gradual turn to a view of grace where the love of God is given as a 'new desire' see James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 187–200.

²⁷ Compare the 'Doctrinal Conclusion' to John Cotton's *Gods Free Covenant of Grace*, in *A Library of American Puritan Writings: The Seventeenth Century*, ed. Sacvan Bercovitch, Vol. 13, *The Way of Faith* (New York: AMS Press, 1983), 27–28.

²⁸ For a helpful review of the various theological positions connected with different trajectories of introspection, see Michael P. Winship, *Making Heretics: Militant Protestantism and Grace in Massachusetts, 1636–1641* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 12–27.

²⁹ Michael McGiffert, *God's Plot: The Paradoxes of Puritan Piety* (Amherst, Mass.: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1972), 25–26. One substantial difference between Shepard and Edwards is worth noting. Whereas McGiffert notes that 'Shepard insisted on the renewability of conversion ...' (*ibid.*, 26), Edwards, precisely because a position like Shepard's '... tended to slight the evidential significance of the original experience' (*ibid.*, 26), usually restricted the term to a onetime, reorienting vision of God.

³⁰ McGiffert, *God's Plot*, 24.

Edwards associates with unregenerate sensibilities, e.g., the limitations of self-love. We will see in the present chapter through the example of Brainerd and Edwards's reflections on church life that the ensuing reorientation of motives and values creates a new possibility for the converted self, but a possibility that must be actualized in the exercise of limited human freedom. Countervailing impulses and habits remain in opposition to the new pre-volitional desires implanted in the conversion experience. Augustine's ruminations on his first vision of God in the *Confessions* are particularly apt here. 'I lacked the strength to hold my gaze fixed,' Augustine complains, 'and my weakness was beaten back again so that I returned to my old habits, bearing nothing with me but a memory of delight and a desire as for something of which I had caught the fragrance but which I had not yet the strength to eat.'³¹ We have someone, in short, who has experienced the vision of God but regretfully admits that his prior habits are too strong to allow him to enjoy the benefits of that vision with stability. He is in receipt of powerful new reasons to change. But until he has made some actual headway toward breaking the bonds of those past habits, he will have to be content with the *memory* of enjoying fellowship with God, the experience of God granted through the sacraments, and whatever presence of the Holy Spirit is compatible with his level of sin. Brainerd's case is less dramatic with regard to sexual impulses but his melancholia was a force of similar power. In the manner of Augustine's portrayal of the newly converted person struggling with the residual promptings of pre-conversion habits, Brainerd too seems to '... turn and twist a will half-wounded this way and that, with the part that would rise struggling against the part that would keep to the earth.'³²

If one can pass the test of securing sanctified charity as an ingrained habit, of course, all is well and good. But a great deal of Puritan literature on the moral life is devoted to less straightforward 'cases of conscience.' The prevalence of persons falling between the premises of a strict application of the syllogism is at least one impetus for the sub-tradition of Puritan casuistry. A range of devotional practices was directed at the average churchgoer whose behavior indicated some aspects of a life of sanctified charity but not in a sufficient amount

³¹ St. Augustine, *Confessions*, VII, xvii, trans. F.J. Sheed (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Co., 1993), 122.

³² *Confessions*, VIII, viii; trans. Sheed, 140–141; Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue*, 126–197.

or in sufficient degree to confidently claim assurance. '[The Puritan] worries,' writes McGiffert, 'lest his faith, infirm as he knows it to be, turn out to be his own fabrication—rather than Christ's gift—and thus damnable like all human works. He finds it hard to live by faith when his faith is jarred by the opacity of God's decrees' The opacity of human affectivity makes it even worse.³³ The task of the minister in such cases is to help would-be saints to develop the characterological wherewithal to claim assurance of salvation. We have in the Brainerd of the first portion of the biography, then, an example of someone who has had a putative conversion experience but still lacks assurance.³⁴

Again, melancholy was a prominent obstacle in his path. Brainerd was subject to the kind of extreme religious scruples with which Ignatius of Loyola struggled and in response to which the latter formulated his theology of discernment. Generally conceived, discernment is the ability to accurately judge one's ethical and/or spiritual sensibilities in light of communal norms. In a Christian context, it has the more precise meaning of (i) determining whether impulses or insights one has are truly promptings of the Holy Spirit and (ii) based on such promptings, determining what God wills for one to do in a given situation. As W.A.M. Peters observes, '[o]nce insight and clarity is gained, that is, once they have been properly discerned, some will be rejected ... as dangerous, worthless, coming from the evil spirit, others will be accepted ... and cherished'³⁵ This term, of course, has somewhat different meanings in the context of Counter-Reformation Catholicism than in eighteenth-century New England.³⁶ For Brainerd's journal indicates a process of increased discernment as to what religious insights genuinely issue from his conversion experience and those counterfeit impulses which, though similar to the genuine impulses, nevertheless issue from his melancholy or some other unregenerate source.

Perhaps the most significant instance of the acquisition of discernment in Brainerd's spiritual autobiography was his learning to distin-

³³ McGiffert, *God's Plot*, 12; see also, *ibid.*, 24.

³⁴ Weddle, 'The Melancholy Saint,' 302.

³⁵ W.A.P. Peters, 'Ignatius of Loyola and "Discernment of Spirits",' in *Discernment of the Spirit and of Spirits*, Casiano Floristán and Christian Duquoc, eds. (New York: Seabury Press, 1979), 29.

³⁶ For an compelling treatment of the relationship between discernment in Ignatius and discernment in Edwards, see William C. Spohn, 'Finding God in All Things: Jonathan Edwards and Ignatius of Loyola,' in *Finding God in All Things: Essays in Honor of Michael Buckley, S.J.*, ed. Michael J. Himes and Stephen J. Pope (New York: Crossroads, 1996), 244–261.

guish the regenerate form of being 'weaned from the world' from a selfish and sinful desire to die and be free of the arduous demands of discipleship.³⁷ He is, I believe, expressing something of the former in his entry of October 22, 1742:

[u]ncommonly weaned from the world today: My soul delighted to be a 'stranger and pilgrim on the earth' [Heb. 11: 13]: I felt a disposition in me never to have anything to do with this world: The character given of some of the ancient people of God, in Heb. 11:13, was very pleasing to me, 'They confessed that they were pilgrims and strangers on the earth,' by their daily practice; and oh, that I could always do so! ... Oh, it is sweet to be thus weaned from friends and from myself, and dead to the present world, that so I may live wholly to and upon the blessed God!³⁸

He can recognize, in other words, the possibility of 'living wholly for God' as separable from despair. In the entry for Feb. 2, 1743, in contrast, Brainerd reports feeling 'an uncommon pressure of mind.' '... I seemed to struggle hard for some pleasure in something here below,' he writes, 'and seemed loath to give up all for gone; but then saw myself evidently throwing myself into all hardships and distresses in my present undertaking; I thought it would be less difficult to lie down in the grave: But yet I chose to go rather than stay.'³⁹ For someone with his psychological makeup, it seems plausible that some of the religious experience of being 'weaned from the world' would interpenetrate and mutually reinforce the kind of melancholy to which he was prone. Brainerd reports such a reinforcement in his discernment of the difference between 'a self-righteous pleasing ourselves ... which godly souls sometimes are guilty of' and the boldness appropriate to 'the testimony of a good conscience, which good Hezekiah had' in his entry for August 4, 1743.⁴⁰ In his entry for December 6, 1744, he reports as a positive improvement that God had shown him the sinfulness of allowing the impossibility of ever fully doing his duty to escalate into a despair that held him back from performing even those duties that were within his power.⁴¹ In his entry for July 9, 1744, he similarly

³⁷ Weddle, 'The Melancholy Saint,' 300. Pettit reports that Brainerd confesses to having 'longed for death' during his freshman year in New Haven (1739) ('Prelude to Mission,' 40).

³⁸ *WJE* 7, 183-184.

³⁹ *WJE* 7, 197.

⁴⁰ *WJE* 7, 211-212.

⁴¹ Although it seems to stem from the restlessness of Brainerd's search for assurance, Weddle's appreciation of the confidence in the evidentiary significance of practice mounted by New Light Separatists might well be cited as an example of this sentiment

reported that ‘... through divine goodness, it was apparent to me that it was ... [God’s] cause I pleaded for, and not my own: And was enabled to make this an argument with God to answer my requests.’⁴² With this insight, he seems to gain discernment into how his melancholy had hitherto distorted what truly religious insights he did have:

... when God had withdrawn himself, then, instead of living and dying in pursuit of him, I have been disposed to one of these two things; either (first) to yield an unbecoming respect to some earthly objects, as if happiness were to be derived from them; or (secondly) to be secretly *froward* and impatient, and unsuitably desirous of death And that which often drove me to this impatient desire of death, was a despair of doing any good in life; and I chose death rather than a life spent for nothing⁴³

But there remains a fine line between being ‘weaned from the world,’ such that one would be willing to give up one’s life for the glory of God, and unsuitably desiring death as an escape from the difficulties incumbent upon disciples.

At the point of his entry for January 14, 1744–1745, Brainerd is only able to act upon the correct discernment of this tension while in possession of the comforts of what he regards as God’s immediate presence. Otherwise, he reports that he is ‘apt to be impatient to be gone.’⁴⁴ He reports a similar impression of being ‘in a strait between [the] two’ in his entry for June 22, 1745.⁴⁵ Six months later, however, in his entries for December 23 & 24, 1745, he seems to be making some progress in the proportion of one over the other, feeling ‘... in the main a sweet mortification to the world, and a desire to live and labor only for God’⁴⁶ This sentiment seems to be lasting when he reports after an additional six months (July 9, 1746) that he ‘... longed to live wholly and only for God, and saw plainly there was nothing in the world worthy of my affection; so that my heart was dead to all below; yet not through dejection, as at some times, but from views of a better inheritance.’⁴⁷

in connection with *Life of Brainerd* (‘The Melancholy Saint,’ 316). The inability of works to grant comfort is indeed one of the ‘dark sides’ to the practical syllogism identified by Calvin.

⁴² *WJE* 7, 260.

⁴³ *WJE* 7, 275 italics original.

⁴⁴ *WJE* 7, 283–284; Edwards recognizes this as a shortcoming.

⁴⁵ *WJE* 7, 300.

⁴⁶ *WJE* 7, 347.

⁴⁷ *WJE* 7, 412.

And yet, in his entry for August 20, 1746, suffering under the effects of the consumption that would shortly take his life, he notes that ‘... what gave me some encouragement, was, I had a secret hope that I might speedily get a dismissal from earth and all its toils and sorrows.’⁴⁸ His entry for September 23, 1747, sixteen days before his death, marks his final comment on this subject: ‘... felt uncommonly peaceful: It seemed as if I had now done all my work in this world, and stood ready for my call to a better. As long as I see anything to be done for God, life is worth having: But oh, how vain and unworthy ’tis to live for any lower end!’⁴⁹ Using modern psychological frameworks as a basis, some twentieth century interpreters of Brainerd have questioned whether he ever finally broke free from his melancholy.⁵⁰ While I believe there is some reason to accept this assessment, we must take at face value Edwards’s satisfaction that Brainerd nevertheless secured assurance of salvation.⁵¹ It is to how this process works—and the application of the FOLD_f therein—that we now turn. What we will discover is how, as he progressed in discernment, prudence was subsequently necessary to increase the force of truly religious insight relative to the force of the semblances born of melancholy. As Henry More observed of the three Primitive Virtues (of which prudence is the first), ‘... no sort of Virtue can either be acquir’d or practic’d, or even well thought on without them.’⁵²

⁴⁸ *WJE* 7, 420.

⁴⁹ *WJE* 7, 468.

⁵⁰ Even if Brainerd himself broke free, Julius H. Rubin suggests that Edwards’s use of him as a normative typology for gaining assurance of salvation glamorized melancholy to subsequent generations of evangelicals (*Religious Melancholy & Protestant Experience in America* [New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1994], 94). Rubin considers the impact of Brainerd’s example on Isaac Bird (1793–1876), on Samuel Hopkins (1721–1811), and on the New Divinity movement more generally (*Religious Melancholy*, 94–110). See also Joseph Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, & American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 62–87, 103–106.

⁵¹ *WJE* 7, 450. This is not necessarily to disagree with Weddle’s assessment that Edwards ‘claims more abiding [sanctified] habit of mind than Brainerd’s testimony confirms’ (‘The Melancholy Saint,’ 311). Edwards is either exaggerating or using a difference sense of assurance when he says that Brainerd had full ‘satisfaction’ immediately after his conversion (*WJE* 7, 504).

⁵² Henry More, *Enchiridion ethicum* (London, 1690; New York: Facsimile Text Society, 1930), 208.

Discernment and Prudence as Edwardsean Cardinal Virtues

It was an important moment in Brainerd's religious development when he felt himself liberated from the despair of not doing those duties in his power given that it was not in his power to fulfill all Christian duties with full faithfulness. Prior to this experienced liberation, however, he gives some indication of the mechanisms of melancholy that resisted his progress. He reports on April 9, 1742, for example, that he feels 'so low' and 'so little of the sensible presence of God' that he 'can't think, nor act, but every motion is sin.'⁵³ Positive thinking and positive action are required, however, if deeper discernment is going to benefit the regenerative process in any comprehensive way. Despite successful discernment, there can be no ethico-religious growth without prudence. Even if one can distinguish routinely the impulses and courses of action recommended by true religious insights from the impulses and courses of action recommended by melancholy and sin, one must still manage one's day to day activities to one's spiritual advantage.

Prudence is the virtue pertaining to this process. Classically speaking, it refers to the ability to predict how present actions and practices will affect future states of affairs, preeminently the agent's state of character. Edwards's discussion of the practice of examining one's conscience before participating in the Lord's Supper is a good example of how proper prudential management is incumbent upon the would-be saint in search of assurance of salvation. The perplexed conscience is in a double bind—it being sinful *not* to go if one is qualified and sinful *to go* if one is not.⁵⁴ If someone is incapable of judging his or her status in the present, he or she must prudentially manage daily practices to clarify the matter as quickly as possible. As discussed in Chapter 4, Edwards regards the created order as embodying diverse means explicitly designed by God for this purpose and the agent is culpable for failures of assurance that stem from not taking advantage of them. 'Tis a wise dispensation of God,' he insists, 'that he has so ordered things, that comfort in ordinances, and in all duties, and under all providences, should be to be obtained in a way of diligence; and that slothfulness should be the way to perplexity and uneasiness, and should be a way hedged up with thorns'⁵⁵ With increased prudence, Brainerd could

⁵³ *WJE* 7, 160.

⁵⁴ *WJE* 12, 260, 304.

⁵⁵ *WJE* 12, 494.

better predict how his itinerant preaching strategies would affect his ethico-religious development.

Brainerd's journal does exemplify some degree of growth in prudence accompanying the growth in discernment we have documented. As his discernment between true 'weanedness from the world' and a sinful desire to die expanded, for example, he could learn by trial and error which practices to adopt and which to forbear so as to increase the force of regenerate sensibilities relative to unregenerate counterfeits. Brainerd's entry for April 30, 1745 is a powerful indication of such learning.

... of late, I have seen it my duty to divert myself by all lawful means, that I may be fit, at least some small part of my time, to labor for God. And here is the difference between my present diversions and those I once pursued, when in a natural state. Then I made a god of diversions, delighted in them with a neglect of God, and drew my highest satisfaction from them: Now I use them as means to help me in living to God: fixedly delighting in him, and not in them, drawing my highest satisfaction from him. Then they were my all; now they are only means leading to my all. And those things that are the greatest diversion, when pursued with this view, don't tend to hinder, but promote my spirituality; and I see now, more than ever, that they are absolutely necessary.⁵⁶

Far from being a sinful diversion from spiritual exertion he came to regard some rest, and even entertainment, as a prudent means of reserving his energies for greater efficiency in God's cause.

But the interpreter of Edwards faces a difficult choice at this juncture. For one thing, as we shall discuss, the clarity this insight produces marks precisely that point at which Brainerd's search for assurance of salvation begins to falter. On the other hand, neither in this work nor in the other major treatises does Edwards himself have a fully articulated vision of the place where it falters: namely, the manner in which prudence and other cardinal virtues as necessary to guide the acquisition and maintenance of theological virtues. Edwards discusses several natural virtues substantively in the *Two Dissertations*, but as we have seen, with the main point of distinguishing them as fundamentally discontinuous echoes of true virtue or charity. Fortitude is assumed and given intermittent attention in his extended reflections of Christian practice under trials in the *Religious Affections*; but there is nothing remotely analogous to Aquinas's systematic discussion of how the moral and cardinal

⁵⁶ *WJE* 7, 292–293.

virtues contribute the acquisition and maintenance of the supernatural virtues. Accordingly, we need to draw on sources outside of the corpus to generate a basic template we can later customize for the particularities of Edwards's ethics. Aquinas himself is too remote historically; but some roughly contemporaneous formulations of this issue are available in the writings of Nicolas Malebranche Edwards may even have read. There are sufficient similarities with Malebranche's argumentation, in any case, to fill in the theoretical gaps in Edwards's explicit commentary. With Malebranche again in the helpful role of doppelgänger, not only will the conceptual grafting 'take' and provide clarity of Edwards's sense of Brainerd, it will also prove structurally sound enough to draw the ecclesiastical writings together with *Life of Brainerd* into a coherent picture of the main sweep of mature writings pertaining to ethics.

Malebranche forcefully raised the question of how to understand the interrelationship of human freedom and divine necessity in the acquisition of charity as a habit. For Malebranche, as Craig Walton notes, '[w]e are inclined to move toward what seems to us to be good, and to avoid or move away from what seems to us to be bad. But freedom is something different, and hard to acquire—for it would mean the ability to love things and actions insofar as they are lovable, loving them just for what they are, no more and no less.'⁵⁷ This is fundamentally the realm of the virtue of prudence.⁵⁸ Without regularly invoking this term precisely, Malebranche breaks down its analogue into two further and constitutive virtues he names 'strength of mind' and 'freedom of mind.' Strength of mind refers to the powers of attention. What will most significantly disrupt the processes of sanctification in Malebranche's model is the inability to attend to the divine order available to some extent in natural reason and much more substantively in the bestowal of grace. 'Without this effort,' he insists, 'the soul will live in blindness and disorder since there is no other natural way to obtain the light which must lead us.'⁵⁹ Freedom of mind is the virtue pertaining to the holding back of consent to what ends our concupiscence might crave for the satisfaction of self-love but which Reason and the love of order deny as valid.⁶⁰ Malebranche denotes both 'cardinal virtues' and explains them

⁵⁷ Craig Walton, 'Translator's Introduction' in Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 10.

⁵⁸ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 73–74.

⁵⁹ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 76.

⁶⁰ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 83–84.

in terms of how they will facilitate the acquisition and maintenance of the only 'true virtue,' charity.

One of the things that places Malebranche's model ahead of Edwards's in terms of detail is that he addresses how the cardinal virtues themselves develop.⁶¹ Recognizing that like other virtues, they are acquired through use and diminish through disuse,⁶² lends a realism to his account of the dependence of the supernatural on the natural. A second advantage of this doppelgänger is that he gives explicit philosophical attention to how the irregular expression of love for the divine nature made possible through God's self-revelation (conversion in Edwards's terminology) becomes habitual charity (conversion in Malebranche's terminology). A full account of Malebranche's treatment of these issues is inconvenient and unnecessary. But two brief observations allow us to return to Edwards's conversation about Brainerd with greater resolution. First, his treatment regards the habit of charity, while supernaturally bestowed as part of its origin, as like any other virtue in the processes of its solidification. It is about clearing away, with the exercise of naturally acquired cardinal virtues, obstacles (such as the passions) which might threaten it and bolstering, again with the exercise of naturally acquired cardinal virtues, facilitators (such as the passions) which could inflame it.⁶³ Second, as we saw in Chapter 3, the integration of the acquisition and maintenance of supernatural virtue with the acquisition and maintenance of natural virtues allows Malebranche a supple vocabulary for encompassing complex biblical antimonies such as Col. 3:3. 'We are dead to sin because of living in Jesus Christ our Head,' Malebranche affirms; '[b]ut,' he subsequently counsels, if we are 'to carry out this design, according to the advice of St. Paul, ... we must diminish the weight of sin which, by the momentary efforts of excited concupiscence, is capable of counterbalancing the strongest grace and thereby of separating us from God.'⁶⁴

⁶¹ Edwards devotes moderate attention to parents in the *Humble Inquiry* and how they bring up their children in the Christian life even though he seems to have been more suspicious of the confidence of John Cotton and others in the federal covenant that all but guaranteed election to the children of the elect. Catherine A. Breckus very helpfully pieces together Edwards's commentary on the theology of childhood within a wide range of sources in 'Children of Wrath, Children of Grace: Jonathan Edwards and the Puritan Culture of Children,' in *Perspectives on Children in Christian Thought*, ed. Marcia J. Bungee (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2001), 300–328.

⁶² Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 84–85.

⁶³ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 98.

⁶⁴ Malebranche, *Treatise on Ethics*, 122.

The role of prudence in negotiating between regenerate mortification of pride and the unregenerate aggravation of self-hatred suggests that Brainerd's search for assurance of salvation may not be as idiosyncratic as is sometimes suggested. For sadness about the goods of the world forgone is a potential problem in any highly self-sacrificial account of discipleship. It was a clearly documented phenomenon upon which any spiritual advisor within the medieval monastic context, for example, would have had to offer remedies. The manner in which Brainerd's melancholy influenced his spiritual life would there have been treated either as a species of spiritual dryness (*ariditas spiritualis*) or spiritual sloth (*acedia*). The two aberrations share a lack of appropriate delight (*gaudium*) in the spiritual good for human beings (*bonum divinum*): as Siegfried Wenzel puts it, an '... inappetence, ... [a] lack of desire for God and cheerlessness in activities that relate to Him directly (prayer, meditation, and the like)'⁶⁵ But there is nevertheless a crucial difference between them.⁶⁶ The person undergoing spiritual dryness feels the lack of delight and laments it. The person undergoing spiritual sloth, in contrast, while he or she feels the same lack of delight, does not lament it; he or she has lost a certain degree of sensitivity to the beauty and desirability of the life of charity. It is arguable that Brainerd exemplified both types of spiritual aberration: *acedia* 'behind the scenes' of the written text and spiritual dryness when he has recovered enough sensitivity to the desirability of a life of charity that he can lament in the journal entries his intermittent loss of delight in it.

Where Edwards's treatment of Brainerd mirrors the treatment of these aberrations in the medieval monastic context is in the ambivalence about the extent to which such states are sinful and blameworthy. On the one hand, at least according to Aquinas's analysis, *acedia* was an aversion to the spiritual good for human beings (*tristitia de bono divino*), and as such the prototypical instance of mortal sin.⁶⁷ On the other hand, as Wenzel astutely recognizes, '... this sin is not always "perfect" or completed. Its beginning is an aversion of man's sensitive appetite against the divine good. This aversion *per se* is not a mortal sin; it becomes such only if reason gives its full consent. Therefore, saintly persons frequently experience movements of *acedia* without however falling

⁶⁵ Siegfried Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth: Acedia in Medieval Thought and Literature* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1967), 50.

⁶⁶ Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 60–63.

⁶⁷ *Summa theologiae*, 2a2ae, 35, 3.

into mortal sin.⁶⁸ Accordingly, there is a dimension of *acedia* which, though it may lend support to the temptation to ‘flee’ from the spiritual good for human beings,⁶⁹ is neither sinful nor blameworthy in and of itself. Indeed, Wenzel traces a long tradition in this line of thought characterizing *acedia* as a natural effect of arduous spiritual practices on the body. ‘Natural’ melancholy, with which *acedia* is closely associated in this tradition, can both reduce its culpability and be controlled by moderating the strain of spiritual practices on the body.⁷⁰ Wenzel notes how after the assistance of divine grace, Guillaume d’Auvergne ‘... recommends against *acedia* ... the human remedies of lightening the burden of work and other exercises and relaxing the bonds of the cloister.’⁷¹ Although, following Gregory the Great, Aquinas firmly regards its *terminus* as a spiritual malady, he does recognize the older tradition on the relationship of *acedia* to the bodily humors at least with regard to one dimension of its *origin*. He regards it as something of an inevitable consequence of the humanity’s dual nature of flesh and spirit, and, after the Fall, of the former lusting against the latter (Gal 5:17).⁷²

Ignatius and the Jesuit communities he established provide a similarly relevant model of prudential management of self-destructive ‘excesses’ of mortification. With regard to bodily sustenance for example, Ignatius voiced a common Puritan approbation for restraint Edwards shared: ‘... the more one can cut back on one’s normal intake, the sooner will one arrive at the just mean in eating and drinking.’⁷³ But this rule is qualified with the caveat, ‘[p]rovided one takes care not to fall ill.’⁷⁴ ‘... [I]f one finds that in cutting back in this way one lacks either the bodily strength or the inclination for spiritual exercises,’ Ignatius cautions, ‘one will easily come to a decision about what is more suitable for the sustenance of the body.’⁷⁵ With regard to the melancholy ‘spir-

⁶⁸ Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 50; italics original.

⁶⁹ Wenzel identifies pusillanimity, *torpor circa praecepta*, rancor, and *evagatio circa illicita* as instances of the ‘secondary’ sins which, though itself neither inherently sinful or blameworthy, *acedia* can inspire (*The Sin of Sloth*, 50–51).

⁷⁰ Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 59.

⁷¹ Wenzel, *The Sin of Sloth*, 60.

⁷² Aquinas, *De malo*, qu. 11, art. 2, resp.; cited in Wenzel, 49–50.

⁷³ *Spiritual Exercises*, para. 210, in *Saint Ignatius of Loyola: Personal Writings*, translated with introductions and notes by Joseph A. Munitiz and Philip Endean (London: Penguin, 1996), 325. On Edwards’s own sparing dietary discipline see Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 51, 53, 96, 107, 133, 135, 251, 420, 529n34, 530n18, 588n21.

⁷⁴ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Personal Writings*, 325.

⁷⁵ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Personal Writings*, 326.

its' and their impediments, Ignatius writes that '[i]n the case of people who are making serious progress in the purification of their sins ... the opposite [rule] ... takes place, because then it is typical of the bad spirit to harass, sadden and obstruct, and to disturb the soul with false reasoning, so as to impede progress'⁷⁶ After years of intense fasting, Ignatius discerned the acceptability of eating meat of which he was '... incapable of ever being doubtful'⁷⁷ He experienced similar discernments condemning the recounting of past sins, the failing to make use of God's gifts, and extreme penitential practices limiting his ability to minister to the needs of others.⁷⁸ Although Ignatius was subject to the same kind of masochistic impulses as Brainerd,⁷⁹ he was more successful not only in discerning their counter-virtuous nature but also in prudentially managing a systematic approach to rooting out their disruptive influence.

Pride or self-love is the 'opposing' vice to melancholy. The spiritual advisor must help the would-be saint avoid sinful inappetence for religious goods without yet allowing the telos of mortification to be displaced. Edwards believes that God has endowed all human beings with self-love, a certain appreciation for symmetry and regularity (including self-consistency), and a certain degree of pity; and these are not without value in human life. But while he recognizes these tendencies as participating in the hierarchy of spiritual and moral goods, they fall short of—indeed, they are not intrinsically related to—the love of primary beauty or true virtue. The self-love that is not sinful must accordingly be isolated and protected from the self-love that is sinful. In his entry for August 12, 1742, fairly soon after his conversion experience, Brainerd mourns '... how much self-exaltation, spiritual pride, and warmth of temper I have formerly had intermingled with my endeavors to promote God's work'⁸⁰ A first stage of ethico-religious development is for discernment to identify and isolate the destructive operation of a given vice in the agent's life. Brainerd seems able to do this with respect to pride in his entry for July 9, 1744. He reported that '... through divine goodness, it was apparent to me that it was ... [God's] cause I pleaded for, and not my own: And was enabled to make this an argu-

⁷⁶ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Personal Writings*, 348.

⁷⁷ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Personal Writings*, 25.

⁷⁸ Saint Ignatius of Loyola, *Reminiscences*, para. 25, 33.

⁷⁹ William W. Meissner, S.J., M.D., *Ignatius of Loyola: the Psychology of a Saint* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1992), 372–373.

⁸⁰ *WJE* 7, 176.

ment with God to answer my requests.⁸¹ As it has been discussed, prudence then sets about the task of considering the most efficacious way of maximizing the productive self-love and its corollaries among the natural virtues and minimizing pride and other obstacles to the ingrain-ing of the supernatural virtues. The confluence of the religious mortification of pride and the irreligious taking of pride in mortification highlights the new forms of spiritual pride that tempt the would-be saint. In his entry for June 18, 1747 Brainerd describes his assurance of salvation *via* the practical syllogism despite the fact that he ‘... could discover much corruption attending ... [his] best duties, many selfish views and carnal ends, much spiritual pride and self-exaltation, and innumerable other evils which compassed ... [him] about’⁸² It is unlikely that an unregenerate person will put up with the suffering of the Christian life over the long haul; but it is a testament to the subtlety of Edwards’s moral psychology that he does not regard it as impossible to ‘... see that glory which God has promised to those who suffer for his sake’⁸³ and still be acting with one’s own honor as one’s ultimate end. Edwards observes that ‘[t]here is a pretended boldness for Christ,’ for example, ‘that arises from no better principle than pride. A man may be forward to expose himself to the dislike of the world, and even to provoke their displeasure, out of pride. For ’tis the nature of spiritual pride to cause men to seek distinction and singularity’⁸⁴

While it no doubt took a great deal of tenacity for Brainerd to accomplish even the slim rate of success his missionary work did enjoy,⁸⁵ finally his melancholy proved too formidable an obstacle for any normalized utilization of discernment. His strict practice of mortification did not allow for the destructive edge recognized both in the medieval monastic context and in Ignatian spirituality. Nor do his spiritual journals reflect a normalized acquisition of prudence.⁸⁶ Not even the most sympathetic observer could suppose that he fully developed, as Daniel Westberg puts it, ‘... the habit of using right operative syllogisms, i.e[.,]

⁸¹ *WJE* 7, 260; see also, *WJE* 7, 450.

⁸² *WJE* 7, 449–450.

⁸³ *WJE* 8, 317.

⁸⁴ *WJE* 2, 352.

⁸⁵ Brainerd’s efforts to keep his congregation together on a workable piece of land (where they could regularly gather for worship and encouragement) were often frustrated by colonial profiteers, as Edwards’s own efforts were later to be at Stockbridge.

⁸⁶ Whether he failed because he did not discern all of the malignant effects of his melancholy or because his early death did not allow him to fully translate this discernment into prudence is not necessary to determine.

correct patterns of deciding actions: not only having the right principles, but being able to see when and how they apply, to use them correctly as major premisses for action, and to discern correctly the nature of the particular action being judged by the principle in the light of the overall values or ultimate end of the agent.⁸⁷ Brainerd's melancholy hampered him in forwarding the kingdom of God when the 'sweetness' and comfort of feeling God's immediate presence were absent.⁸⁸ He later recognized that these moments of comfort might arise '... only from some flights of the imagination, or some suggestion made to ... [the] mind, of Christ's being "their's," God's "loving them," and the like.'⁸⁹ That is to say, they may not accurately reflect his true standing before God. The extra burden of despondency Brainerd bore nevertheless made him especially susceptible to seeing these moments of feeling close to God as (i) necessarily indicative of God's favor and (ii) needful for full Christian action.⁹⁰ When his desire to mortify his pride was paired with his desire to be of some use in forwarding God's kingdom, the result inspired Brainerd to long '... to do more for God than ... [his] weak state of body would admit of.'⁹¹ In his entry for July 11, 1744, for example, he reports that he '[l]onged for Abraham's faith and fellowship with God; and felt some resolution to spend all my

⁸⁷ Daniel Westberg, *Right Practical Reason: Aristotle, Action, and Prudence in Aquinas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) 228. Aquinas gives a succinct statement of how prudence ought to govern the operation of charity in a question on fraternal correction: 'Aristotle says that *prudence makes us do the things best calculated to attain a given end*, and it is with such things that counsel and choice are concerned. Prudence, then, makes us do the right thing to attain the end of some moral virtue, for example of temperance or fortitude, while at the same time, what we do is chiefly an act of that virtue whose end is the goal of our action. Now the reproof involved in fraternal correction is aimed at ridding our brother of his sin, and this is charity's concern; and so it is clear that such a reproof is chiefly an act of charity, in the sense that charity, so to speak, commands it, but, secondarily an act of prudence, in the sense that prudence sees to the execution and direction of the act' (Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, 2a2ae, 33, 1 ad 2, in Vol. 34, *Charity*, trans. R.J. Batten, O.P. [Oxford: Blackfriars; London: Eyre and Spottiswoode; New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975], 277; italics original). Taking issue with how Brainerd managed his melancholy, one can imagine Edwards remonstrating with the itinerant missionary along these lines.

⁸⁸ William Perkins did regard feeling loved by God 'in particular' as a sure foundation of assurance of salvation (*The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience* ... [Cambridge: John Legat, 1606; Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1972], 83).

⁸⁹ *WJE* 7, 445.

⁹⁰ On (i) see *WJE* 7, 194, 202; on (ii) see *WJE* 7, 183.

⁹¹ *WJE* 7, 279.

time for God, and to exert myself with more fervency in his service; but found my body weak and feeble.⁹²

The conflict between his melancholy desire to be, as Edwards puts it, ‘... *excessive in his labors*; not taking due care to proportion his fatigues to his strength’⁹³ and his proper desire to work for God’s good while still being ‘weaned from the world’ came to something of a crisis in his entry for August 5, 1744:

I am obliged to let all my thoughts and concerns run at random; for I have neither strength to read, meditate, or pray But alas, though my all seems to be adrift, and I stand and see it, I dare not lament; for this sinks my spirits more, and aggravates my bodily disorders! I am forced therefore to divert myself with trifles; although at the same time I am afraid, and often feel as if I was guilty of the misimprovement of time. And oftentimes my conscience is so exercised with this miserable way of spending time, that I have no peace; though I have no strength of mind or body to improve it to better purpose. Oh, that God would pity my distressed state!⁹⁴

His inability to prudentially manage the tension between the demands of mortification and the debilitating efforts this had on his physical and psychic health sometimes created a form of paralysis. He clearly violates Perkins’s strong injunction in his series of questions on prudence in *Cases of Conscience* that ‘[e]very man must measure himself by his owne strength, and doe nothing beyond his abilitie.’⁹⁵ Brainerd seems unable or unwilling here and elsewhere to make decisions about matters that will greatly affect his day-to-day practices and, by extension, the bolstering of virtuous inclinations through the diminution of non-virtuous inclinations.

⁹² *WJE* 7, 260.

⁹³ *WJE* 7, 95 italics original.

⁹⁴ *WJE* 7, 264–265; see also *WJE* 7, 345. Even Brainerd’s writing of the diary itself could be considered an example of self-destructive desire to exert himself beyond the strength of his body and mind. Edwards gives us an especially telling comment in his footnote to the opening of Part VIII of his biography (*WJE* 7, 429). He refers to Thomas Shepard’s *Certain select cases resolved, specially, tending to the right ordering of the heart: that we may comfortably walk with God in our general and particular callings* (London: printed for John Rothwel, 1650) as treating a case similar to Brainerd’s. Keeping a journal when sick, which Brainerd did, is specifically mentioned as a guile of the devil turning himself into ‘an angel of light’ and as a habit that ‘cast[s] on fuel to fire his sickness’ (Shepard, *Certain select cases resolved*, 3–4); cited in *WJE* 7, 429.

⁹⁵ Perkins, *Cases of Conscience*, 480; italics original. The letters ‘v’ and ‘u’ have been reversed from the original to their modern usage.

Rather, in a manner indicative of the inertia and passivity exhibited by some melancholiacs,⁹⁶ he hoped to let God make decisions for him.⁹⁷

Brainerd's reluctance to participate in religious community particularly highlights the importance of prudence. His initial reasoning about spiritual practice, i.e., prior to his full recognition of the impact of his melancholy, affirmed the necessity of solitude.

My state of solitude does not make the hours hang heavy upon my hands. Oh, what reason of thankfulness have I on account of this retirement! I find that I *don't*, and it seems I *can't*, lead a Christian life when I am abroad and can't spend time in devotion, Christian conversation, and serious meditation, as I should do. Those weeks that I am obliged now to be from home, in order to learn the Indian tongue, are mostly spent in perplexity and barrenness, without much sweet relish of divine things; and I feel myself a stranger at the throne of grace, for want of more frequent and continued retirement.⁹⁸

While he often notes in his early entries occasions where he had 'some profitable Christian conversation' with friends he meets on his extensive travels, his most palpable impressions of personal interaction are negative. 'I find,' he writes, 'though my inward trials are great, and a life of solitude gives 'em greater advantage to settle and penetrate to the very inmost recesses of the soul; yet 'tis better to be alone than incumbered with noise and tumult.'⁹⁹ On the other hand, he definitely recognized the benefits of Christian friendship, exclaiming in his entry of March 6, 1745, '... how kind has God been to me! How has he raised up friends in every place where his Providence has called me! Friends are a great comfort ... 'tis he makes them friendly to me.'¹⁰⁰ When opportunities of substantially availing himself of these comforts did arise, however, he chose not to take advantage of them. It is notable in this respect that within a small space of time two separate congregations made invitations to Brainerd to be their minister.¹⁰¹ Given his low

⁹⁶ Rubin discusses a specific diagnostic category developed during the nineteenth century for certain religious melancholiacs: *melancholia attonita* (*Religious Melancholy & Protestant Experience in America*, 156–157, 176–187).

⁹⁷ Compare Edwards's advice in *Some Thoughts* where he notes how even true promptings of the Holy Spirit ought not to be followed blindly (*WJE* 4, 442). That is to say, some truly religious promptings might be inappropriate or undesirable to follow in specific situations even though they might be judged spiritually beneficial on the whole or in general.

⁹⁸ *WJE* 7, 233; italics original.

⁹⁹ *WJE* 7, 218; see also *WJE* 7, 245.

¹⁰⁰ *WJE* 7, 289; see also *WJE* 7, 180, 229, 231, 245, 353.

¹⁰¹ *WJE* 7, 244–245.

level of prudence, he was understandably ‘something exercised in mind with a weight and burden of care’ in considering these offers.¹⁰² In his entry for May 16, 1746 he gives us an invaluable account of his decision making process:

When I attempted to look to God respecting my worldly circumstances and his providential dealings with me in regard of my settling down in my congregation, which seems to be necessary and yet very difficult and contrary to my fixed intention for years past, as well as my disposition, which has been and still is, at times especially, to go forth and spend my life in preaching the Gospel from place to place, and gathering souls ‘afar off’ [Eph. 2: 17] to Jesus the great Redeemer; when I attempted to look to God with regard to these things, and his designs concerning me, I could only say ‘The Will of the Lord be done’ [Acts 21: 14]: ‘Tis no matter for me’ [Gal. 2: 6]. The same frame of mind I felt with respect to another important affair I have lately had some serious thoughts of: I could say, with utmost calmness and composure, ‘Lord, if it be most for thy glory, let me proceed in it; but if thou seest that it will in any wise hinder my usefulness in thy cause, oh, prevent my proceeding: for all I want, respecting this world, is such circumstances as may best capacitate me to do service for God in the world.’¹⁰³

Even when it might be said that he had sufficient levels of discernment to make an informed choice as to the course of action that would maximize the strengthening of his truly religious impulses, he seemed unwilling to do so. His remark of September 27, 1746 that he took comfort in the thought that his recovery from his consumption did not depend on his own choice may be cited as a further example of the rejection of prudential reasoning.¹⁰⁴ His final balancing of what he regarded as the spiritual benefits of solitude with those of the regular Christian company and better living conditions he could expect from settled life in an established community seems to have encompassed the worst of both worlds.¹⁰⁵ The permanent location of his mission allowed him neither this benefit nor the full benefit of solitude. For he writes,

my health is so much impaired, and my spirits so wasted with my labors and solitary manner of living (there being no human creature in the

¹⁰² *WJE* 7, 244.

¹⁰³ *WJE* 7, 397.

¹⁰⁴ *WJE* 7, 430.

¹⁰⁵ See, however, Pettit’s point that Brainerd’s ‘sense of duty confined him to the lowest of the social order’ (‘Prelude to Mission,’ 48). Brainerd’s final reasoning in making up his mind to set up a permanent mission can be found in *WJE* 7, 397, 400–401. As noted in Chapter 1, the practical syllogism does not require perfection. Despite some residual sinfulness, Brainerd reports that ‘... God was pleased, as I was

house with me), that their repeated and almost incessant application to me for help and direction are sometimes exceeding burdensome, and so exhaust my spirits that I become fit for nothing at all, entirely unable to prosecute any business sometimes for days together. And what contributes much toward this difficulty is, that I'm obliged to spend much time in communicating a little matter to them¹⁰⁶

It seems unlikely that a person aware of the mutual reinforcement of the real trials of discipleship and nihilistic impulses born of melancholy could choose daily practices so exacerbating of his own weakness. At the very least, Brainerd could not be said to have taken advantage of the full range of resources at his disposal for allaying his physical and psychic distress.¹⁰⁷

Although as hagiographer Edwards clearly wishes to affirm that Brainerd achieves assurance of salvation, as theologian, he has some reservations about the way he went about it.¹⁰⁸ These reservations raise questions about Edwards's account of post-conversion habituation that cannot be resolved in the context of *Life of Brainerd* itself. For if it is clear that Edwards wishes to grant assurance to the missionary, it is less clear how he managed to achieve it. Is it that he 'has the spirit of a martyr' in persevering in his missionary task despite the hardships involved?¹⁰⁹ Is he to be praised in spite of those hardships he caused himself because he persevered despite the additional burden of his melancholy? If so, how are the hardships he inflicted upon himself to be factored in? In order to answer what resources Brainerd in the wilderness had at his disposal for translating the peak experience of conversion into the ingrained habit of sanctified charity, we must turn to Edwards's views on a source of which he did not take full advantage—the church. It is, after all, the church that is the normal context for post-conversion habituation. Bringing *Life of Brainerd* into conversation with the ecclesiastical writings may also shed some light

reviewing, quickly to put this question out of doubt, by showing me that I had from time to time acted above the utmost influence of mere self-love; that I had longed to please and glorify him as my highest happiness, etc.' (*WJE* 7, 450).

¹⁰⁶ *WJE* 7, 354.

¹⁰⁷ See Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 19–20.

¹⁰⁸ Pettit's point about Edwards's editing strategies is relevant to my assessment that Brainerd's example was not uncritically affirmed: '... if Edwards was willing to alter the thirty-six pages of manuscript that were extant, he may also have done the same with the whole manuscript' ('Prelude to Mission,' 49).

¹⁰⁹ *WJE* 8, 322.

on why, later in his career, Edwards adopted stricter requirements for church membership—a change of heart which is not straightforwardly explained in the ecclesiastical writings and which still puzzles historians.¹¹⁰

Edwards's Perfectionist Ecclesiology: Puzzles and Prospects

On its face, Edwards's ecclesiology seems of self-enclosed historical or cultural interest, relevant primarily to church historians or students of early American society. As David D. Hall illustrates, Edwards's writings on the qualifications for participation in the Lord's Supper lay at the center of a nexus of far-reaching forces impinging on early American religion: Presbyterianism, 'New Light' separatism, tensions in the Halfway Covenant adopted by the Cambridge Platform, popular religion, lay challenges to clerical authority, and Great Awakening revivalism among others.¹¹¹ Indeed, Edwards's ecclesiastical writings have been characterized as subject not only to the cultural embeddedness of Massachusetts religious history but perhaps even forces peculiar to socio-economic idiosyncrasies of the politics of one city within that history, Northampton.¹¹² Counter to the conclusion among some church historians and literary critics that the history and categories of moral philosophy are brought to bear upon such episodes in early American letters with little fruit,¹¹³ I believe these texts present a heretofore ignored resource for connecting Edwards's moral psychology to his

¹¹⁰ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 51, 85. Danaher proposes a highly innovative and persuasive account of why Edwards was so concerned about limiting access to the Lord's Supper to the regenerate; but admits that '[h]is decision to change these requirements at the particular point he did in his ministry remains a mystery' ('By Sensible Signs Represented,' 286). Marsden offers what is perhaps the most definite, if not yet determinate, explanation by connecting it to Edwards's waning influence over Northampton's youth culture in the 'bad book affair.' 'Stoddardean practice did provide for barring persons of scandalous behavior for communion. Yet for Edwards, if the town was unwilling to bear the scrutiny that rule properly implied, then it might be time to rethink the whole system that so confused the line between church and town' (*Jonathan Edwards*, 298).

¹¹¹ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 7, 1–86.

¹¹² Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 7, 85.

¹¹³ David Laurence suggests that there is an insularity to certain forms of literary-critical and/or historical approaches to Puritan literature ('Moral Philosophy and New England Literary History: Reflections on Norman Fiering,' *Early American Literature* 19 [1983–1984]: 187–214).

soteriology. Some historical background is necessary, however, before we can draw these connections. The focal point of our discussion will be Edwards's mid-career departure from the long-standing policies of his famous grandfather, Solomon Stoddard.

Stoddard's policy on church membership had been to fully include all of the baptized that were 'morally sincere.' His intentions in doing this were long deemed 'liberal-minded.' More recent scholarship has appreciated the complex interpenetration of his 'open door' policy of church membership with his evangelical preaching style.¹¹⁴ Hall, for instance, suggests that Stoddard did not categorically regard all of the morally sincere as converted, but rather, saw the Lord's Supper as a 'converting ordinance,' i.e., a further part of the church's role as an ordained means of grace to everyone.¹¹⁵ In this view, church membership ought not to be limited to the regenerate because this would greatly reduce their chances of getting converted in the first place. More than a dabbler in Aristotelian philosophy,¹¹⁶ nor did Stoddard ignore the moral example of other church members and the moral norms implicit in Scripture as a means of grace alongside the 'evangelical' function of the preaching of the Word.¹¹⁷

Given what I have claimed about the 'Aristotelian' 'moral psychology of habit' in Edwards's ethic of virtue, it would seem that his views might find a happy coincidence with the more open policy of church membership. The more the would-be saint's character could be shaped in the pattern of virtue prior to conversion,¹¹⁸ after all, the less resis-

¹¹⁴ See especially, E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570-1720* (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1974).

¹¹⁵ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 38-43.

¹¹⁶ In noting that Stoddard exemplified different elements of Christian Aristotelian ideas and argumentation it must be recognized that Stoddard's personal library was uncharacteristically extensive. Even in 1664, when 80 books appear in his catalogue (as opposed to 462 at his death in 1729), his library included many works devoted to scholasticism and least one commentary on the *Nicomachean Ethics* (Golius's *Epitome Doctrinae Moralis, ex Decem Libris Ethicorum Aristotelis ad Nicomachum Collecta* [Cambridge, 1634]) (Norman S. Fiering, 'Solomon Stoddard's Library at Harvard in 1664,' *Harvard Library Bulletin*, Volume XX, No. 3 [July 1972]: 255-269). The young Edwards presumably had access to his grandfather's library, at least while Stoddard was alive.

¹¹⁷ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 25. In seeking to place stringent preconditions as qualifications on gaining admittance to the church *qua* school (*WJE* 12, 264), Edwards seems to share Aristotle's observation that not everyone is a feasible candidate for moral education (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1095b4-13).

¹¹⁸ 'Images of Divine Things' No. 34, *WJE* 11, 59.

tance to post-conversion habituation in charity there would be.¹¹⁹ En route to denying that human beings cooperate with God in the 'first grace,' Francis Turretin, for instance, admits that 'in spiritual no less than in natural generation, we reach spiritual birth by many preceding operations and that God (who wills to perform that work in man not by violent seizures, or enthusiastical movements, but in a way suitable to our nature; and who carries it on not in one moment, but successively and by degrees) uses various dispositions by which man is little by little prepared for the reception of saving grace (at least in ordinary calling).'¹²⁰ Edwards's change of heart on the requirements for full church membership nevertheless demonstrates a strong dissatisfaction with the policy he inherited from Stoddard. Behind all of the stipulations that the church's judgment issue out of humility and exhibit a sensitivity to the great diversity of spiritual experience,¹²¹ Edwards sought to uphold a robust conception of 'visible sainthood' uncharacteristic of his imme-

¹¹⁹ While not as substantively explored as post-conversion habituation, pre-conversion habituation does play an important role in Edwards's moral theology as well. Several sermons in the recently released fifth installment of *Sermons and Discourses* are addressed specifically to young people (*WJE* 22, 156–180, 319–338). In a manner consistent with the concept of negative moral good developed in the *Two Dissertations*, remaining free of vicious habits that it would take greater work to counteract subsequent to conversion is a definite advantage. Edwards blames parents for their children's inability to make professions of godliness along these lines (*WJE* 12, 315, 318). Edwards's more comprehensive analysis of the nature of dispositions in *Freedom of the Will*, and his critique of antinomianism in the *Religious Affections* must be seen to lend those passages addressing pre-conversion habituation an importance disproportionate to their sparse number. In the *Religious Affections*, it is stressed that the ordinary course of spiritual growth does not involve God bestowing grace directly into the soul in a fully formed state but mediately through the human will and habits; for the exceptions, see *WJE* 12, 483–484.

¹²⁰ Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, translated by George Musgrave Giger, edited by James T. Dennison, Jr. (Phillipsburg, N.J.: P & R Publishing), Vol. 2, 542 (Fifteenth topic, Q 5).

¹²¹ In the *Religious Affections*, Edwards cautioned against expecting infallibility in even the best test of true godliness, i.e., persistent Christian practice (*WJE* 2, 193–197). At least a formal recognition of these concerns remains in the ecclesiastical writings (*WJE* 12, 291–299; see also Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 83). Nevertheless, Edwards suggests that in the final analysis it is easier to judge between the godly and the ungodly than it is to judge between the morally sincere and the morally insincere. This is because of the more intricate gradations of meaning in sincerity when compared with the 'all or nothing' criteria posed by the difficulty of being a 'disciple indeed' (*WJE* 12, 261–262, 299, 492–493). Because conversion can take place at any point during the process of natural moral development, and so there might be quite strong residual habits of vice among converted persons who will eventually persevere in sanctified charity, one must nevertheless be cautious about being too exclusive.

diate predecessors or contemporaries.¹²² In a move that ‘enraged’ his congregation,¹²³ he denied access to the Lord’s Supper to those whose profession of godliness was not consonant with more or less substantive regeneration and baptism to all children except those whose parents could be accepted to full membership on these terms.¹²⁴

One of the principal ways Edwards had of distinguishing between proper and improper candidates for church membership relied on the kind of particular regenerate sensibilities we noted in his appropriation of the moral sense. Here it is a spiritual sense. Only the regenerate can ‘discern the Lord’s body in the sacrament with that spiritual sensation or spiritual gust.’¹²⁵ Similar to the concept of consent to being itself Edwards uses to describe the kind of benevolence that is true virtue in the *Two Dissertations*, Edwards stipulates in the ecclesiastical writings that the nature of a profession of faith required by partaking of the Lord’s Supper is an inner union or consent to it. ‘Such are the Christian sacraments,’ he writes, ‘whose very design is to make and confirm a profession of compliance with that covenant, and whose very nature is to exhibit or express the uniting acts of the soul’¹²⁶ One of Edwards’s means of characterizing the discernment of qualification for the Lord’s Supper is the experience of a ‘saving interest’ in the gospel message. It is not any generic union with Christ that counts as the

¹²² The idea that discipleship makes great demands that only true saints are able to meet is present in some form as early as the *Charity and Its Fruits* sermon series. Suffering and humiliation, Edwards argues there, is something that it would be difficult to pursue as an expression of profane self-love or pride.

¹²³ In using the term ‘rage’ to describe their reaction, Hall qualifies that ‘Edwards wished to abolish what for them was basic, the procedures that linked family structure and religion’ (‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 12, 60).

¹²⁴ Something of the importance of Edwards’s change of heart on the requirements for church membership may be inferred from the fact that he risked his reputation and the livelihood of his large family in seeking to implement it (see Hall, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 12, 78–79; Jonathan Edwards, ‘Narrative of Communion Controversy,’ *WJE* 12, 549). There were, however, two even more ‘radical’ moves Edwards could have made in this controversy, which he did not. He did not explicitly insist upon (i) the requirement, prevalent among Separatists, that candidates for full membership give describe their religious experiences in front of the congregation (Hall, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 12, 83). Nor did he (ii) recommend that the true ‘visible’ saints in Northampton separate themselves formally from the Congregational church to avoid a ‘mixed multitude.’

¹²⁵ *WJE* 12, 262.

¹²⁶ *WJE* 12, 301.

saving interest requisite of rightful communication at the Table, but only a union that experiences Jesus as Lord.¹²⁷

In invoking more rigorous self- and communal examination into the sacramental practice of his contemporary Connecticut River valley, Edwards did not merely seek to bar the morally unworthy from the Lord's Supper because their presence 'tends to obscure the visibility of the piety of professors.'¹²⁸ He was also trying to raise the contrast between regenerate and unregenerate sensibilities. This, in turn, makes the requirement of 'visible sainthood' less open to misapprehension in the reprobate who, by definition, lack the ability to compare regenerate and unregenerate sensibilities side by side. Part of the delight in the Eucharist that a candidate for full church membership would in theory be expected to manifest would not terminate merely upon formal doctrinal knowledge of the benefits received by communicating but extend to a powerful emotional reaction to the existential landscape in which this privilege flows from benefactor to benefited. Seeing the host in the Eucharist means that accompanying one's 'saving interest in him and relation to him' is a very particular kind of gratitude.¹²⁹ It is a gratitude that perceives that the redemptive act this cup reenacts is given to those 'deserving ... eternal perdition under God's wrath and curse' by means of 'the extreme sufferings of the Son of God ... carried through those pains by a love stronger than death.'¹³⁰

Perhaps the most conspicuous emotional state concomitantly present with the regenerate status requisite of full church membership is the desire to have Jesus as one's master. Whereas the unregenerate 'cry "Lord, Lord" ... are forward to profess respect, and claim relation to him' and 'shall plead and bring arguments to confirm their claim,'¹³¹ only 'those who profess to hearken to, believe and yield submission to the word of Christ' really have this relation.¹³² 'None do submit to Christ as their teacher,' and Edwards directly rejects 'common faith' and 'moral sincerity' as a foundation for this, 'but such as having their hearts purified by faith, are delivered from the reigning power of sin.'¹³³ The regenerate 'love their master supremely,' 'cry to him for

¹²⁷ *WJE* 12, 226.

¹²⁸ *WJE* 12, 260.

¹²⁹ *WJE* 12, 226.

¹³⁰ *WJE* 3, 142, 143.

¹³¹ *WJE* 12, 225.

¹³² *WJE* 12, 226.

¹³³ *WJE* 12, 264.

knowledge; above all their gettings;¹³⁴ and because of this love they do not regard it as odious or beneath their dignity to be among those 'sitting with Mary, as little children, at Jesus' feet to hear his word.'¹³⁵

Those aspects of the Reformed tradition that emphasize the opacity of qualities signifying soteriological status are not lacking in the Edwardsean corpus and can be found in the ecclesiastical writings as well.¹³⁶ It is, of course, possible for unregenerate persons to think that they have 'habitual hunger or relish for the spiritual food there represented' without truly having the 'inward vital and experimental taste of that flesh of the Son of Man, which is meat indeed.'¹³⁷ Some who think themselves rightfully included in full communion with the church will be 'thrust out.'¹³⁸ Accordingly, one rightly asks Edwards for an account of how these elusive spiritual sensibilities are to be recognized. In answer, one can point to the fact that some of the same criteria Edwards proposes in these texts are roughly synonymous with the ethical dictates noted in the *Religious Affection* and reinforced elsewhere in the corpus. He returns once again to motive and to consistent practice.

Using the imagery of the goldsmith,¹³⁹ Edwards enjoined would-be communicants to 'try themselves.' Even if the unregenerate can understand rationally the difference between earthly rewards and eternal rewards, lacking the ability to 'savor the things that be of God,'¹⁴⁰ they cannot quite make themselves act upon this notional knowledge.¹⁴¹ One of the most characteristic Edwardsean litmus tests is loving God 'above the world.'¹⁴² Goodness and one's commitment to God should reign over evil in the self.¹⁴³ The spiritual sensibilities of the regenerate are, for instance, not merely 'pangs of affection' or 'impressions on the imagination,' moreover, but a 'habitual temper of the mind.'¹⁴⁴ Only true saints can consent to follow the covenant in a manner implied by a true profession because only true saints have the divine where-

¹³⁴ *WJE* 12, 265.

¹³⁵ *WJE* 12, 265.

¹³⁶ *WJE* 2, 193–197; *WJE* 12, 179–180, 207, 312, 369–370.

¹³⁷ *WJE* 12, 261.

¹³⁸ *WJE* 12, 227.

¹³⁹ *WJE* 12, 258–259.

¹⁴⁰ *WJE* 3, 279.

¹⁴¹ *WJE* 3, 153–156.

¹⁴² *WJE* 12, 223; see also, *WJE* 3, 145.

¹⁴³ *WJE* 12, 403; *WJE* 3, 146.

¹⁴⁴ *WJE* 12, 310; *WJE* 3, 1970, 120.

withal to follow the covenant.¹⁴⁵ Because what Jesus teaches as indicative of following him is very difficult to do,¹⁴⁶ moreover, this kind of preponderance of goodness can only be made manifest under trials.¹⁴⁷ The 'mortification of a disposition to exalt [oneself]' is necessary for the 'evangelical humiliation' at the heart of Edwards's sixth sign of truly religious affections.¹⁴⁸ Only when one's allegiances are brought to their uppermost point of contrast—and to consent to one is *ipso facto* to reject the other—does one know whether one really seeks Jesus as master or whether one serves two masters.¹⁴⁹ Professions of faith, such as the kind Edwards entertained as part of the ecclesiastical process governing access to the Lord's Supper,¹⁵⁰ are at least in principle designed to resist univocality and separate out competing claims in this respect.¹⁵¹

The above sketch is sufficient to indicate that Edwards's change of heart over church membership manifests a broad congruity with the critique of antinomianism that gained momentum in his progression of works on the revivals. During the years following the waning of the revivals, he gained confidence in the inseparability of discipleship and salvation within the ordained order of creation.¹⁵² The poignancy of his distinction between the discipleship of the regenerate and unregenerate church members is consistent with the differentiation of truly religious affections from their many semblances in the *Religious Affections*. Whereas in this earlier work he is reluctant to make such judgments in actual practice, however, the unique circumstances of the communion controversy later forced him to take a more unequivocal line. In the ecclesiastical writings, Edwards argues that it is possible to achieve sufficient accuracy in judging between the reprobate and the regenerate to make use of it in church policy. While God's power and agency cannot be said to be limited to the ordained order—

¹⁴⁵ *WJE* 12, 212, 214.

¹⁴⁶ *WJE* 3, 141.

¹⁴⁷ *WJE* 12, 415; *WJE* 2, 389; *WJE* 8, 313–325.

¹⁴⁸ *WJE* 2, 312.

¹⁴⁹ *WJE* 12, 264, 383.

¹⁵⁰ *WJE* 12, 361.

¹⁵¹ *WJE* 12, 492. Whether they always accomplish this given the *principle of charity* also required of the church body is another matter, of course. On the latter see Baird Tipson, 'Invisible Saints: The "Judgment of Charity" in the Early New England Churches,' *Church History* 44, No. 4 (December 1975): 460–471; and Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 49, 50, 59, 71, 83, 85.

¹⁵² Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 56–62.

in the case of the providential mercy shown Jacob, for instance—he nevertheless concludes that what exceptions to the regularity of the ordained order there are cannot be sufficiently comprehended to be relied upon.¹⁵³ Living up to the rarified requirements of discipleship, not the confident expectation of God's continued mercy, must be the church's foundation for identifying full members *qua* visible saints.¹⁵⁴ The tall order of distinctive motive-structure, degree of supererogation, and aesthetic delight that undergirds the sharp differentiation of true virtue from common virtues in the later *Two Dissertations* seems to excise even those minimal qualifications of the visibility of regeneration Edwards granted his detractors in the communion controversy.

Despite the overlapping insistence upon high levels of virtue in multiple works in the corpus, the full meaning of visible sainthood Edwards intended to affirm in his rejection of Stoddardeanism nevertheless remains subject to the Calvinist historiography of his legacy in American Protestantism.¹⁵⁵ We have covered some of this ground in previous chapters. Barring the upper echelons of what Edwards could have intended in invoking the concept of 'visible saints' with an appeal to 'works righteousness' was considered in Chapter 1 in connection with Calvin's concerns about the practical syllogism. The diminution of 'visible sainthood' under the rubric of imputed righteousness was considered in Chapter 2 as part of a discussion of the conversation between Puritans and the Cambridge Platonists Edwards appropriated. Chapters 3 & 4 considered two more indirect ways of reducing the extent to which virtue is required for salvation. If human beings are not free in any substantive way and merely acting irresistibly as ineffectual second causes to God's efficacious primary causality, what virtue they had

¹⁵³ Edwards discusses the blessing of Jacob in *WJE* 12, 271–272, 483–484.

¹⁵⁴ *WJE* 12, 319. See, in contrast, Calvin's views on the lasting forgiveness of members of the church (*Institutes*, IV, i, 21).

¹⁵⁵ Rightmire, for one, denies that Edwards was after a 'pure church' in the communion controversy ('The Sacramental Theology of Jonathan Edwards,' 57). Fredrick W. Youngs overstates the extent to which Edwards was comfortable with unregenerate church members ('The Place of Spiritual Union in Jonathan Edwards's Conception of the Church,' *Fides et Historia* XXVIII, No. 1 [Winter/Spring 1996]: 35–37). Thomas A. Shafer must be noted as a prescient exception in arguing that 'Edwards' doctrines of excellence and virtue provide a foundation for the fellowship of the saints' ('Jonathan Edwards' Conception of the Church,' *Church History* XXIV [1955]: 55). Shafer's is among a handful of treatments of Edwards's ecclesiology that consider the *Two Dissertations* relevant (*ibid.*, 52–54).

would not be theirs qua individual human as much as it was the divine nature itself in the form of the indwelling Holy Spirit. But perhaps the most powerful mechanism whereby the degree of actual virtue in Edwards's conception of 'visible sainthood' has been diffused is the animus separating Edwards from the ecclesiastical perfectionism that has historically served as a boundary between the 'magisterial' reformation and the 'radical reformation.'

The more one emphasizes the proportion of imputed righteousness to inherent righteousness the more diminished a conception of virtue would need to count toward 'visibility.' Calvin's elect do not necessarily need to manifest high levels of virtue in their behavior to retain either their place in the church or assurance of salvation. Given that human beings are only regarded by God *as if* they were righteous, not *as* righteous, at least moderate moral lapses lose the character of a failure to persevere in righteousness. Although the gift of justification is not given without a dimension of actual righteousness that grows as a person draws nearer to God, to regard perseverance in actual virtue as a requirement of full church membership would be to hold human beings to a standard both beyond Scripture and beyond the correlative testimonies of reason and experience.¹⁵⁶ Accordingly, Calvin is content with such good works as would be indicative of the elect, though still imperfect, person's gratefulness. In his own 'communion controversy,' Edwards portrays Solomon Williams as espousing the view that faith and works of a 'mustard seed' proportion were sufficient warrant for the 'existence' of real faith and works.¹⁵⁷ Williams clearly did not think, in any case, that perseverance in high levels of charity under the extreme trials of discipleship was necessary to qualify for full membership in the church.

It must be said that Edwards gives a certain impression that he has worries along these lines. The difficulty of 'searching the hearts' of another person, a difficulty he explicitly and widely shared in the *Religious Affections*,¹⁵⁸ was often cited as a reason why a highly charitable acceptance of a 'profession' of godliness should be sufficient for the

¹⁵⁶ Indeed, those who hold out for such perfection, i.e., the Anabaptists, are characterized as 'troublesome in their seditions' and as succumbing to a temptation for 'ill-advised zeal for righteousness' (Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, Book IV, Part 1, section 16, ed. John T. McNeill, trans. Ford Lewis Battles [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1960], 1030).

¹⁵⁷ *WJE* 12, 398.

¹⁵⁸ See *WJE* 2, 193–197. This is similar to Calvin's view (e.g., *Institutes*, IV, i, 8).

‘external sign’ of grace historically requisite for church membership.¹⁵⁹ With this kind of rigorous criterion for distinguishing ‘visible saints’ from the ‘morally sincere,’ it is not surprising that he felt it necessary to defend himself against the charge of over-scrupulosity. That Edwards admits a threshold to the accuracy of his criteria of ‘visible sainthood’ is some indication that he saw a need to do this as well.¹⁶⁰ So too are the two model professions he proposed to his congregation.¹⁶¹ They are indeed, as Hall points out, fairly benign;¹⁶² and their relative pliancy thereby allows Edwards to avoid both the charge of being a ‘searcher of hearts’ and the charge of astringency.¹⁶³ The theme of the profanation of the Lord’s Supper, not incidentally part of Edwards’s argument in the *Humble Inquiry* and *Misrepresentations Corrected*, is further vehicle of conformity to at least classic Calvinist ecclesiology (though certainly not all streams of eighteenth-century New England Congregationalism).¹⁶⁴

In the final analysis, however, this fourth means of decreasing the upward reaches of what Edwards could have meant by ‘visible sainthood’ can be no more definitive than the either three considered in previous chapters. Most of Edwards’s protestations about not being a

¹⁵⁹ The latter is well documented in Tipson, ‘Invisible Saints,’ 462–466.

¹⁶⁰ *WJE* 12, 180.

¹⁶¹ *WJE* 12, 361.

¹⁶² Hall, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 12, 61.

¹⁶³ *WJE* 12, 312; *WJE* 12, 367, 369, 370.

¹⁶⁴ Those who see only bread and not the heavenly host eat unworthily (*Institutes*, IV, xii, 5; *WJE* 12, 309, 419n; Danaher, ‘By Sensible Signs Represented,’ 282–283). Edwards cites the harsh Scriptural warning against this (I Cor. 11: 28–29) and so asks ‘... is it not better, that some true saints, through their own weakness and misunderstanding, should be kept from the Lord’s Table, which will not keep such out of heaven; than voluntarily to bring in multitudes of false professors to partake unworthily, and in effect to seal their own condemnation?’ (*WJE* 12, 310). Edwards compares the covenant implicit in the Lord’s Supper to the covenant of marriage (*WJE* 12, 205). Like the marriage vows, this profession can exhibit a deficiency in intention that renders it annulable or void. ‘... [I]f we are sensible that we don’t do this sincerely,’ he asserts, ‘we can’t profess that we actually do it; for he that don’t do it sincerely, don’t do it at all’ (*WJE* 12, 211). What makes the intentionality of ‘professing to make the transaction of that covenant our own’ is the knowledge of the possession of saving faith (*WJE* 12, 205). The latter, of course, is itself a prior gift of God’s (*WJE* 12, 211). While baptism, prayer, attendance upon the preaching of the Word are all religious duties that do not require or entail the seal of saving faith for participation, the Lord’s Supper is for Edwards one ‘... whose very nature and design is an exhibition of those vital active principles and inward exercises, wherein consists the condition of the covenant of grace, or that union of soul to God, which is the union between Christ and his spouse, entered into by an inward hearty consenting to that covenant’ (*WJE* 12, 301).

'searcher of hearts' must be seen to be rhetorical rather than substantive discomfort about distinguishing 'true saints' from the 'morally sincere' and other categorizations of the unregenerate.¹⁶⁵ Close scrutiny of the argument of *Misrepresentations Corrected* reveals that his reluctance to claim infallibility in using this rule is not based on any fallibility in the rule itself.¹⁶⁶ He is quite sure it is absolute within the confines of the ordinary regularities of the creation. That he only claims 90 % accuracy for the rule is instead based on human fallibility in applying it.¹⁶⁷ With regard to the Scriptural image of the wheat and tares, for instance, Edwards observes that any of the latter that do find their way in with the former do so 'through men's infirmity and Satan's procurement.'¹⁶⁸

Scholars have allowed the self-appellation of *non-Separating* Congregationalism to stand without much skepticism about what Freud would have called the 'narcissism of minor differences' and the limit it placed on requiring 'perfection' in its members.¹⁶⁹ That is to say, they have allowed a rhetorical expression of polemical 'aggression' a disproportional weight in assessing the theological meaning of 'non-Separating.'¹⁷⁰ Anabaptists clearly took separation further than did Puritans (to the separation of church and state), further even than Separates (to the separation from society at large). Regardless, some Puritans shared with Separatists much of the ideal of the church as an institution comprised of 'called saints' even if they did not think it could be pragmatically attained.¹⁷¹ The remaining sections of the chapter will be devoted to

¹⁶⁵ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 61–62.

¹⁶⁶ *WJE* 12, 493.

¹⁶⁷ *WJE* 12, 180.

¹⁶⁸ *WJE* 12, 287.

¹⁶⁹ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, trans. and ed., James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton, 1961), 68–69.

¹⁷⁰ Although it is made in the somewhat different context of arguing that scholars have failed to appreciate the full significance of the innovation of requiring a 'relating of experience' for acceptance to full church membership, Baird Tipson has appreciated something of this lack of suspicion in his impressive treatment of how the term 'judgment of charity' was part of an important transatlantic theological debate in the seventeenth century ('Invisible Saints: The "Judgment of Charity" in the Early New England Churches,' *Church History* 44, No. 4 [December 1975]: 460–471).

¹⁷¹ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 83. Though it is beyond the scope of this study to treat these texts in detail, what Hall reveals about the reaction of contemporary Separatists to Edwards's ecclesiastical writings is very telling. Hall considers the example of leading Separatist Ebenezer Frothingham, who was confused about why Edwards still insisted on making the traditional Christian distinction between the visible and invisible churches when his clear implication was to attempt as pure a church as humanly possible (Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 81n3). 'Was this,' Hall queries,

showing how the potential interconnections between the ecclesiastical writings and *Life of Brainerd* can further consolidate the Edwardsean 'logic of virtue' and thereby highlight the less Calvinist dimension of the Puritan heritage he inherited along with the more Calvinist dimensions.

The Church as Polis: Discernment and Prudence as Inescapably Social

Were Edwards's reflections on how Brainerd's melancholy complicated his search for assurance merely coincidental with the shift to the more restrictive form of church membership? It is clearly possible; but there is no reason why we should presume discontinuity in advance. For one thing, the timing of the two scenarios is more than marginally intertwined. Edwards was working on Brainerd's biography while he was thinking about the issue of church membership. He formally announced his decision to admit only those he was satisfied were truly godly persons to the Lord's Supper in 1749, the same year *Life of Brainerd* was published.¹⁷² That Edwards should be worrying about Brainerd's difficulties attaining assurance 'in the wilderness' at the same time as he was preparing to publicly announce his changed position on church membership is highly suggestive. If *Life of Brainerd* and the ecclesiastical writings have little conceptual relationship to one another, their constitutive polemics could be presumed to have disparate terms of argumentation. The real reasons for Edwards's change of heart on church membership could be lost with many other intricacies of local Northampton politics of the 1740s.¹⁷³ If a 'logic of virtue' does indeed connect the two, however, what is it about a church community almost entirely comprised of 'visible saints' that could help us to understand Edwards's reservations about casting Brainerd as an exemplar of the search for assurance of salvation? What is it about how Brainerd's melancholy complicated his search for assurance of salvation that could illuminate

'not the same as what the Separates were maintaining?' (Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 81). John Von Rohr seems to appreciate something of this when he writes that 'Edwards's goal was not to withdraw but to inject greater piety into the churches. Yet on the question of requirements for church membership and participation in the sacraments, he identified very closely with the Separates' (*The Shaping of American Congregationalism, 1620–1957* [Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 1986], 223–224).

¹⁷² Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 347.

¹⁷³ Hall, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 12, 85.

Edwards's highly unpopular turn to such a conception of the church? The best case that the 'logic of virtue' we have been developing answers both of these questions is made in Edwards's concerns about the corruption of the ethico-moral practice of the church by members who, being unregenerate, cannot help others engage in the solidification of the habit of sanctified charity.¹⁷⁴

The manner in which ministers were hired and fired by the church congregation was a component of the 'communion controversy' particularly close to Edwards's heart.¹⁷⁵ If those in charge of this process were unregenerate, and so lacking the informed judgments of 'reason sanctified',¹⁷⁶ they could ally the church with an unregenerate, bad, or otherwise ineffectual minister. The consequences, in such a scenario, would be sorely felt by the godly in their reliance on the church for post-conversion habituation. First and foremost, the minister is the principle authority on discernment in the general response to perplexity of conscience and assurance of salvation. This could take place either in private conference with individuals or in the public context of preaching and giving Christian witness. Liturgy also affects the quality of post-conversion habituation. And as Thomas Shepard observed in *A Wholesome Caveat for a Time of Liberty*, church members 'are to be living stones in God's building; not only to build up themselves, but one another also, that so a man may not only get no hurt from communion of churches, but he may get good indeed from the same.'¹⁷⁷ With regard to

¹⁷⁴ David Laurence perceptively appreciates that 'Edwards understood the problem with Stoddard's preparationism to have been, not that it was too moralistic or emphasized too much a trying to be holy as a requisite for receiving holiness, but that it lacked any representation of a connection between the spiritless effort and the spiritual reception' ('Jonathan Edwards, Solomon Stoddard, and the Preparationist Model of Conversion,' *Harvard Theological Review*, 72 [July-October 1979]: 278).

¹⁷⁵ The question of Edwards's dismissal has interested students of his thought for over a century. To some, his dismissal manifests precisely the kind of sacrifices true disciples of Christ have to make. Others wonder whether Edwards did not take full advantage in the 'communion controversy' of an opportunity to 'mortify' the inflexibility and censoriousness he sometimes criticized in his own character. Though it does not claim to offer a definitive answer as to why Edwards changed his mind on church membership, Patricia J. Tracy's study of Edwards's pastoral career in Northampton offers crucial insight into the social and biographical factors that helped shape Edwards's mature moral theology on this and other issues (*Jonathan Edwards, Pastor: Religious and Society in Eighteenth-Century Northampton* [New York: Hill and Wang, 1980]; see especially, 171-194).

¹⁷⁶ *WJE* 12, 185.

¹⁷⁷ Thomas Shepard, *A Wholesome Caveat for a Time of Liberty*, in *The Works of Thomas Shepard, The First Pastor of The First Church, Cambridge Mass ...* (New York: AMS Press, 1967), Vol. 3, 326.

the Lord's Supper, for example, granting sacramental privileges to the unworthy not only does not render any spiritual benefit, he warns, it can cause positive harm.¹⁷⁸ The public repentance of sinners also needs to be regulated. '...[T]is found by experience,' Edwards relates, 'that scarce any one thing has so great an influence to awaken sinners, and engage them to seek salvation, and to quicken and animate saints, as the tidings of a sinner's repentance, or hopeful conversion'¹⁷⁹ Children and 'weak persons' are particularly vulnerable to misinformation given that they are '... apt to form their notions of religion and true piety by such experimental communications ... much more than they do by the most solid and judicious instructions out of the Word, they hear from the pulpit'¹⁸⁰ Shepard, who Edwards often drew upon in his writings on church membership, adds 'the sad' to the list and regards 'sad things ... as wounds to a man's limbs, that make him halt or fall.'¹⁸¹ The Lord then 'takes very ill at the hands of his people' when 'one Christian hath not a word of encouragement to another, but dry and savorless discourse'¹⁸² One gets some idea of the seriousness with which Edwards regarded this problem when he qualifies this as '... one of the devices whereby Satan has an inexpressible advantage to ruin the souls of men, and utterly to confound the interest of religion.'¹⁸³ Finally, Edwards takes special care to point out the minister's role in adjudicating between community precedent and the authentic rules of the Word of God. If a minister is prevented from doing this, as Edwards believed he was by his Northampton congregation, '... [it] would be in effect to establish, not the word of Christ, but the opinion of the last generation in each town and church as an immutable rule to all future generations to the end of the world.'¹⁸⁴

The principal reason Edwards worried about the unregenerate gaining a majority voice in church affairs was not, of course, the choice of bad ministers in and of itself. Rather, it concerned the way a minister's theological outlook affected ethico-religious striving within a congregation. Edwards characterizes the 'open door' policy of church mem-

¹⁷⁸ *WJE* 12, 314–315.

¹⁷⁹ *WJE* 12, 322. Just prior to this excerpt, Edwards indicates that a minister could prevent this in certain contexts or occasions.

¹⁸⁰ *WJE* 12, 323.

¹⁸¹ Shepard, *A Wholesome Caveat for a Time of Liberty*, *Works*, Vol. 3, 329.

¹⁸² Shepard, *A Wholesome Caveat for a Time of Liberty*, *Works*, Vol. 3, 329.

¹⁸³ *WJE* 12, 332–333.

¹⁸⁴ 'Narrative of the Communion Controversy,' *WJE* 12, 560.

bership as letting in a 'universal ruin,' a ruin subsequently compared to the letting of 'treacherous Frenchmen' into England during a war with France.¹⁸⁵ In criticizing Williams's invocation of the greatest possible interpretive charity for the application of the 'visible sainthood' requirement, Edwards again invokes the theme of treason. '[I]s it the constitution of King George and the British Parliament,' he asks, 'that men should take oaths of allegiance, contrived in words of indeterminate signification, to the end that men who are in their hearts enemies to King George, and friends to the Pretender, may use them and speak true?'¹⁸⁶ This would be, he pleads, against common sense, which '... teaches all mankind, in admission of members into societies ... formed for very great and important purposes, to admit none but those concerning whom there is an apparent probability, that they are the hearty friends of the society, and of the main designs and interests of it; and especially not to admit such concerning whom there is a greater probability of their being habitual, fixed enemies.'¹⁸⁷ His implication seems to be that those who lack 'visible sainthood,' those who lack the actual regeneration of sanctified charity are *ipso facto* a cause of 'ruination.' Should Edwards's reader be left uncertain by this metaphor, he amplifies his point with reference to 'a piece of timber, though not of a durable nature ... put into the frame of a building, because when it begins to rot, it may be pulled out again' and limbs of the human body, 'added to the frame, that had already radically seated in it a cancer or gangrene.'¹⁸⁸ But if Edwards is clear about his willingness to sever the unregenerate 'limbs' of the church, or more preferably still, to prevent unregenerate 'timbers' from ever finding their way into the foundation of the church, it is less clear what he thinks the nature of their respective 'rottenness' is.

Further analysis reveals two principal drawbacks to the regenerate's ethico-religious striving among the unregenerate. The first has to do with how granting church membership to those without real hope of securing true Christian righteousness creates a false security corrosive of the kind of striving after salvation Edwards praised in Paul's character.¹⁸⁹ When Edwards says that he 'can't but think' that the '... over-

¹⁸⁵ WJE 12, 310.

¹⁸⁶ WJE 12, 393.

¹⁸⁷ WJE 12, 406.

¹⁸⁸ WJE 12, 416. Edwards further appeals to the imagery of 'sweet liquor ... tainted' employed by Stoddard in *Danger of Speedy Degeneracy* (WJE 12, 470).

¹⁸⁹ 'The Character of Paul an Example to Christians,' in *The Works of Jonathan*

valuing of common grace, and moral sincerity ... [and] building so much upon them ... naturally tends to sooth and flatter the pride of vain man,¹⁹⁰ he has primarily the ungodly in mind. The unregenerate are, after all, definitionally opposed to their own regeneration. Edwards therefore regards it as 'absurd' to allow a verbal testimony of 'visible sainthood' to stand for the real thing in the unregenerate given that '... at the same instant, while they are making and uttering these promises, they are entirely adverse to any such thing; being then enemies to Christ, willingly rejecting him, opposing his salvation, striving against it, laboring to find out all manner of difficulties and hindrances in the way of it, not desiring it should come yet, etc.'¹⁹¹ Being against their own regeneration, Edwards would regard it as obvious that they would seek to thwart the regeneration of others. Incapable of reaching the ultimate telos of the Christian life, the unregenerate would at least have a vested interest in lesser standards.¹⁹² Were the unregenerate to achieve a majority voice in church affairs, the truly regenerate might well be affected in how hard they strive to make their assurance secure and how well they persevere in it. There is then the further issue of the strong division Edwards stipulates between sanctified charity and its natural counterfeits. Lacking the ability to perform acts of true charity—a truly 'inward' love of God expressed in supererogation (impossible without having natural self-love mortified)—the unregenerate might well compensate by more forcefully emphasizing the 'ordinary' works of goodness accessible through the natural virtues. Edwards describes the dangers of bifurcating 'outward duties of morality and worship' and 'inward duties of the love of God and acceptance of Christ' as having 'a direct tendency to confirm in men an insensibility of the heinousness of those heart-sins of unbelief and enmity against God our Savior, which ... tends to prevent their coming under a humbling conviction of the greatness and utter inexcusableness of these sins, which men must be brought to if ever they obtain sal-

Edwards, A.M., with an essay of his genius and writings by Henry Rogers: and a memoir by Sereno E. Dwight, revised and corrected by Edward Hickman (London: Ball, Arnold and co., 1840), Vol. 2, 857. See also *WJE* 12, 470, 317–319.

¹⁹⁰ *WJE* 12, 317, 470.

¹⁹¹ *WJE* 12, 414, 470.

¹⁹² Edwards writes in 'The Character of Paul an Example to Christians' that '... nothing is more apparent than that it is not thus with the generality of professors here, but that it is a common thing after they think they are safe, to be far less diligent and earnest in religion than before' (*Works*, Vol. 2, 857).

vation.¹⁹³ Pride too, as has been discussed, is a particularly stubborn vice for the regenerate to extract from their characters. And not having had the reorientation of motives and the qualitatively different experience of loving God for God's own sake in conversion, the unregenerate have no real conception of pride as a problem. The effects of common grace and moral sincerity are the only qualifications unregenerate candidates bring with them to church membership. They thus have much less reason to resist the '... overvaluing of common grace, and moral sincerity ... [and] building so much upon them ...' that Edwards decries.¹⁹⁴

A second drawback to the regenerate's ethico-religious striving among the unregenerate has to do with the diminishing of the special love afforded to 'the Brethren' in the Johannine literature.¹⁹⁵ In this connection, Edwards writes that

[i]t is a thing well agreeing with the wisdom of Christ, and that peculiar favor he had manifested to his saints, and with his dealings with them in many other respects, to suppose, he has made provision in his institutions, that they might have the comfort of uniting, with such as their hearts are united with in that holy intimate affection which has been spoken of, in some special religious exercises and duties of worship, and visible intercourse with their Redeemer, joining with those concerning whom they can have some satisfaction of mind that they are cordially united to them in ordering and expressing their love to their common Lord and Savior, that they may with one mind, with one heart, and one soul, as well as with one mouth glorify him¹⁹⁶

The most straightforward reading of this sentiment is that there is a peculiar dignity and beauty to the Lord's Supper when only those who completely see the Host in the Eucharist, who ardently seek union with God, and in whom the Holy Spirit dwells, are allowed to participate.¹⁹⁷ There is a sense in John's encouragements (as well as in some of Paul's admonitions) that special duties are owed 'the brethren' which are not owed to 'the neighbor' more generally. Edwards's invocation of this

¹⁹³ *WJE* 12, 320–321.

¹⁹⁴ *WJE* 12, 317.

¹⁹⁵ See *WJE* 12, 252–254, 309–310, 321, 470.

¹⁹⁶ *WJE* 12, 255.

¹⁹⁷ Even though, finally, he regarded the deleterious consequences of schism and excessively harsh church discipline and the heretical consequences of insisting too strongly on a pure church as more serious, it should be noted that Calvin would recognize the profanation of the Lord's Supper as an important concern (*Institutes*, IV, xii, 5).

term has to do with the peculiar encouragement and support only those who have struggled, and are still struggling, with the peculiar demands of discipleship can give one another.¹⁹⁸ If the church were to be increasingly populated by the reprobate through more ‘open door’ policies, and if their presence has the potential to hamper the godly in their attempt to further ingrain the habit of sanctified charity (in all the various ways described above), then the ability of individual moral strivers to count on the church community for post-conversion guidance in their acquisition of such crucial ethico-spiritual virtues like discernment and prudence might well be diminished.¹⁹⁹ Recall what support Brainerd reported receiving from Christian friends he encountered on his travels. His making use of them in only a few-and-far-between manner might well be mirrored in spiritually needy persons’ ‘travels’ within their own church communities. This concern for the purity of the visible church clearly goes beyond Calvin’s rejection of the conviction to which ‘[m]any are led either by pride, dislike, or rivalry to the conviction that they can profit enough from private reading and meditation’²⁰⁰ ‘[I]n our ignorance and sloth ...’ and ‘fickleness of disposition,’ he argues, ‘... we need outward helps to beget and increase faith

¹⁹⁸ This aspect of the distinctiveness of sanctified charity is not what Edwards wishes to distance himself from when he rejects a conception of love to the brethren that ‘cannot be of a saint to an unsanctified man’ (*WJE* 12, 435). He instead means to reject the idea, made popular in the revivals, that all true saints are endowed with an infallible ability to know other true saints through even the most casual contact. In a footnote to this comment he cites several portions of his published works that denying this ‘strange notion’ (*WJE* 2, 187). Among them is an citation from the *Religious Affections* (*WJE* 12, 187–198).

¹⁹⁹ In response to the question as to why many in seventeenth-century New England’s churches added the requirement of a ‘relating of experience’ to the traditional requirement of external signs of grace by a ‘judgment of charity,’ Baird Tipson perceptively comments that ‘[t]hough this meant abandoning the traditional restraints against judging the hearts of others, the risk would be justified if one’s doubts as to one’s unworthiness to receive the sacrament and the assurance it conveyed were assuaged’ (‘Invisible Saints,’ 470). In this proposed solution, Tipson thus appreciates something of the ‘logic of virtue’ I find connecting Edwards’s ecclesiology to his concerns about Brainerd ‘in the wilderness.’ ‘The apologists [for the new test]’ he observes ‘were not thinking primarily of straitening (or for that matter of broadening) the path into the church but rather of the assurance of those already within the church’ (*ibid.*, 470). Tipson does not extend this analysis into the eighteenth century, however. The case of Edwards’s engagement with Williams is considered as an example—and then, only briefly—of how ‘the judgment of charity had become a time-honored tradition even in New England’ (*ibid.*, 471).

²⁰⁰ *Institutes*, IV, i, 5; ed. McNeill, 1018.

within us, and advance it to its goal²⁰¹ For Edwards, it is not the ordinances of the church themselves that provide this resource for post-conversion habituation, but rather, the collective insights only those most appropriately ‘gathered’ into a church have about the regeneration process to which the ordinances contribute.

The Logic of Virtue: Conversion, Assurance, Second Causes, Perseverance

Given that establishing the distinctiveness of sanctified charity is as close to an animating concern as Edwards’s ethics affords us, one is tempted to say that univocal beginning of the moral life is conversion. It is certainly the undeserved bestowal of God’s own nature that creates the possibility of loving God for God’s own sake and the neighbor beyond the boundaries of natural self love. We have seen that Edwards regards conversion, not unlike Anselm, as a full restoration of the original uprightness of the will.²⁰² The rough and tumble of daily life will inevitably rub it away again, but there are at least discrete moments in the life of the viator where a (divinely bestowed) special receptivity to God approaches what Anselm called a ‘... freedom of choice ... given to rational nature in order to keep that uprightness of will which it had originally received.’²⁰³ Considerably beyond the experience of being saved, the love of God for God’s own sake, the desire to eradicate all contrary impulses and habits, and the desire to serve in the advancement of God’s kingdom, are all given with the vision of God in Edwardsean conversion.

Still, Edwards’s more powerful doctrine of original sin must be said to more forcefully frustrate the enjoyment of the upright will Anselm granted to the restored Christian. It is not so much that sin is eradicated, although this surely happens as well. Rather, what long-term

²⁰¹ *Institutes*, IV, i, 1; ed. McNeill, 1011.

²⁰² St. Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, *De libertate arbitrii* in *Truth Freedom and Evil: Three Philosophical Dialogues*, edited and translated by Jasper Hopkins and Herbert Richardson (New York: Harper and Row, 1967), 139. Anselm’s conception of the restoration of the original uprightness of the will does have a more limited scope than it does for Edwards. For Anselm is principally concerned in this treatise with the uprightness of the will with regard to the human orientation to and acceptance of grace. This does not necessarily translate, as it does for Edwards, into what would ordinarily be considered moral actions. I am grateful to Sandra Visser for helping me to clarify my thinking on this point.

²⁰³ *De libertate arbitrii*, ch. 3; Hopkins and Richardson, ed., 127.

saints have habitually is bestowed all at once upon the newly converted whether they are ready or not. There is something about reprobate life that cannot fully prepare one for the receipt of regenerate sensibilities. One cannot practice acts of charity so as to enhance this habit before one has even the initial disposition activated by God. Even then, pre-volitional impulses toward sin remain which, if they are not resisted, can turn into proper volitions. '[C]onversion don't entirely root out the natural temper ...,' Edwards writes, 'those sins which a man by his natural constitution was most inclined to before his conversion, he may be most apt to fall into still.'²⁰⁴ Pride in spiritual accomplishment and the residual melancholy that comes from putting God above all else are both obstacles to the ingraining of the habit of charity. Finally, even when vicious habits are managed to be broken *in actu*, they are still there *in memoria*. The pleasures of past sins may pale in comparison to the foretaste of the beatific vision; but they are still remembered pleasures reinforced by habit. All of the new sensibilities made possible immediately after conversion, because of the downward pull of original sin, can only be what in *Freedom of the Will* Edwards called *occasional* motives or desires;²⁰⁵ and seeing new possibilities in the vision of God is not, emphatically, the same thing as realizing its new goals or possessing its new habits in any lasting way.²⁰⁶ We have considered in previous chapters how true virtue is not captured by a sporadic show of loving acts because a person's character is '... like an heavy body, which may by some great power be caused to ascend, against its nature, a little while, but soon goes back again towards the center, to which it naturally and constantly tends.'²⁰⁷

The main task of post-conversion habituation is to translate the one time reorienting experience of conversion into the kind of habitual charity that provides a basis for inferring justification from sanctification *via* the practical syllogism. The converted undoubtedly have a 'leg up' on this process. They have, first of all, the memory of seeing some

²⁰⁴ *WJE* 2, 341. Edwards also notes that natural temper should be taken into account when judging the saint's Christian practice for the purposes of assurance of salvation (*WJE* 2, 449).

²⁰⁵ When Edwards distinguished between a *general and habitual moral inability* and a *particular and occasional moral inability* (*WJE* 1, 160), for instance, he is calling attention to how dispositions which are ingrained within a person's character have a greater force of self-replication behind them than dispositions which are not yet ingrained within a person's character.

²⁰⁶ *WJE* 12, 215.

²⁰⁷ *WJE* 3, 198–199.

significant dimension of God's resplendent beauty. Second, Edwards's conception of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit clearly implies a 'presence' of God that perdures. As William Perkins puts it in *Cases of Conscience*, '[f]or as fire without supply of matter, wherby it is fedde & continued, would soone goe out; so unlesse God of his goodnesse, should followe his children, and by new and daily supplies, continue his first grace in the[m], they would undoubtedly soone loose the same, & finally fall away.'²⁰⁸ Prayer and contemplation would fit under this heading, i.e., communing with the Holy Spirit within oneself. The Holy Spirit's influence within the self grows as the person grows in charity; and this affects how well a regenerate person is able to 'stack the deck' of pre-volitional desires against pre-existing and persisting habits counter to charity.

The purposive activity encompassed within the will as a secondary cause of grace is required to maintain the complete regeneration that has been given but is also perpetually being dissipated by the force of original sin and pre-existing vicious habits. Once the saints have been converted, once the fresher memories of its ecstatic elements and the storehouse of its immediate effects have dissipated, there is a greater necessity to keep in spiritual 'shape' by 'running, wrestling, fighting.'²⁰⁹ It is because trials are more difficult to withstand before the coping strategies and attendant virtues that support the maintenance of charity are developed that 'the kingdom of Heaven is not to be taken but by violence.'²¹⁰ Implicit in Edwards's exhortation to would-be church members seeking assurance of salvation to '... thoroughly "exercise themselves unto godliness" [ITim. 4:7], laboring always to "keep a conscience void of offense both towards God and towards man" [Acts 24:16] ...,' is some sense of freedom, some force of 'will' applied to the process of gaining clarity about their most foundational motivations.²¹¹ The saints must 'fortify their minds' against spiritual pride and other temptations that present a counterweight downward from virtue.²¹² Failure in this regard is tantamount to '... insensibly begetting and establishing an evil habit of mind ... by the frequent return of the

²⁰⁸ William Perkins, *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience* (Cambridge: John Legat, 1606; Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1972), 53; the letters 'v' and 'u' have been reversed from the original to their modern usage.

²⁰⁹ *WJE* 2, 387; see also, *WJE* 2, 178–179.

²¹⁰ *WJE* 2, 387.

²¹¹ *WJE* 12, 298.

²¹² *WJE* 12, 322.

temptation, and this many times when they are not guarded against it²¹³ It is not easy to avoid ‘... neglecting ... and casting ... off secret prayer and other duties,’ especially given that the ‘life of carnality and vanity’ will always retain the lure of the ‘customary.’²¹⁴ Again, the one-time peak experience of the vision of God is not sufficient to break the converted agent free of the general residual power of sin. ‘Hills and mountains are types of heaven ...,’ Edwards speculates in *Images of Divine Things*, and ‘[t]o ascend them, one must go against the natural tendency of the flesh’²¹⁵ Accordingly, constant struggle against falling backward is necessary. ‘... [W]e should watch and pray always,’ Edwards instructs, ‘in order to our escaping those dreadful things, that are coming on the ungodly, and our being counted worthy to stand before the Son of Man. There is need of our putting on the whole armor of God, and doing all to stand, in order to our avoiding a total overthrow, and being utterly destroyed by the fiery darts of the devil.’²¹⁶

What I have tried to highlight in Brainerd is that what makes acquiring and maintaining assurance of salvation such a struggle is its dependence upon humanly cultivated habits such as discernment and prudence. Here is where one must resist the temptation to say that conversion is not only the beginning of the moral life but—given the origins of any and all regenerate sensibilities on the vision of God therein—the mode of the moral life in its entirety. This would forget the important set of ideas clarified from Edwards’s French doppelganger (Malebranche) that there are habits beyond charity requisite for keeping charity which may or may not be sufficiently in place for what is communicated in conversion to be retained. Such a view would also give too little credence to the role of natural morality in Edwards’s understanding of God’s providential order. In the form of institutions like families, marriages, friendships, and society, the providential order provides a supportive environment for the natural virtues that maintain and maximize the grace bestowed supra-providentially (as in conversion). God has made these provisions both as a means of casting a reflection of the divine glory in the creation, however pale, and as

²¹³ *WJE* 12, 322.

²¹⁴ *WJE* 12, 308; Augustine, *Confessions*, revised edition, trans. F.J. Sheed (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1993), 206 (Book 10, XL).

²¹⁵ ‘Images of Divine Things,’ No. 64, *WJE* 11, 72.

²¹⁶ *WJE* 2, 388.

a means of restraining the vice that defaces and disrupts the human enjoyment of it. ‘Tis wisely ordered,’ Edwards confidently exclaims, ‘... that the saints should escape perplexity in no other way than that of great strictness, diligence, and maintaining the lively, laborious and self-denying exercises of religion.’²¹⁷ Habits like discernment and prudence, which can be developed prior to conversion, form the ‘weir’ with which one ‘catches’ or ventures to ‘dam up’ the grace received in conversion. But the extent to which this happens is subject to the same mechanisms of augmentation or dissipation that Aquinas grants habits of all kinds.²¹⁸

I suggested at the end of Chapter 5 that although it is highly unlikely that those who have tasted regenerate pleasures would go back to the non-regenerate pleasures of their remembrance, they would neither be guaranteed salvation by being preserved in imputed righteousness (regardless of moral action) or by being preserved in sanctified virtue (non-contingently maintained in high levels of virtue by God’s efficient causality). Success in this venture requires summoning up the volitional wherewithal to consolidate the habits that will allow one to hold onto the grace of the original conversion and further expand what grace perdures because of the continued indwelling of the Holy Spirit. If it should be objected that such a view of the cultivation of habits makes salvation dependent upon human action, my first reply has to be that conversion is still absolutely the venue of ‘arbitrary’ divine operation discussed in connection with ‘Miscellanies’ entry No. 1263. But a second, equally important consideration is ready-to-hand as well. The term *human action* is as open to as many different kinds of possibilities with grace as is the term *second cause* with God’s stature as first cause. One of these is God’s determination to create humans with a modicum of divine ‘arbitrariness’ of freedom of their own actions and subsequent respect of this *imago dei* by withholding the power to save them without them (without any degree of cooperation).²¹⁹ Habit is the locus of the complicated duality of contingency and divine efficacy with which I ended chapter 5. That God creates a habit of charity in regenerate human beings makes that habit inhere within the contingent operations of the human mind; and as such it is at least partially

²¹⁷ *WJE* 12, 298.

²¹⁸ *Summa theologiae*, 1a2ae, Q. 49–53.

²¹⁹ Even preparation for salvation in its entirety could and was thought of by some as reflecting God’s causality (E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003], 44).

subject to the augmentations and dissipations of other repeated activities. But the Holy Spirit indwells in such a way that the recipient of habitual charity would never want to see its preeminently joyous states dissipate. This is why it is all but impossible for the salvation-assuring habit of charity to cease and why the impossibility is only psychological, not metaphysical or ontological, in nature.

Edwards thought the church had a central role to play in this process of habitual charity staying salvation-assuring. Consonant with his rebuttal of the Arminian critique of the Reformed deity's stature as the author of sin,²²⁰ Edwards denies that God can be impugned for not providing greater resources. '...'[T]is not owing to God, nor to any of his revelations,' he insists, 'that true saints ever doubt of their state'²²¹ Rather, human beings are themselves blamed for the sloth and sinful dispositions that prevent them from availing themselves fully of what resources God has bestowed in the creation and in the church.²²² The freedom Edwards granted human beings to pursue the 'best experiences' to give rise to their virtue and rein in their vice was limited by their past experiences—conceived as encompassing both social influences and divine intervention.²²³ Those who learn prudence and temperance in their youth would find themselves pulled downward less powerfully by original sin and the memory of pre-conversion (unregenerate) pleasures if and when sanctified charity was given to them as an occasional motive in conversion. The already prudent and temperate would also find more cognitive and emotional resources for the continual task of keeping sanctified charity 'ingrained' in their characters against the forces of original sin, the memory of pre-conversion pleasures, and the intractability of charity's many semblances and counterfeits. The need for a particular sort of church community is only ratcheted up that much higher by the particularity of experience in which those seeking to maintain assurance of salvation need experts, e.g., when proper self-mortification crosses the threshold into spiritual sloth. Edwards would not be unique within the magisterial Reformation, of course, to regard church ordinances as means of grace in some form.

²²⁰ *WJE* 3, 380–388.

²²¹ *WJE* 12, 298.

²²² *WJE* 12, 298.

²²³ I refer here to an unpublished sermon in the Andover collection (on ICor. 12: 31 'But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way') Paul Ramsey compares to the *Charity and Its Fruits* series (Ramsey, 'Appendix V: Defying and Assisting the Spirit,' *WJE* 8, 755).

The crucial role he assigns to church community in helping would-be saints gain leverage for their developing charity against pre-existing and persisting vices does, however, strain this mold both in the level of virtue for which would-be saints are striving and the ecclesiastical need for a more or less fully regenerate membership.

Brainerd presents a powerful means of linking Edwards's concerns about the prudential self-management of converted agents with his increased concerns about maintaining high standards for full church membership at precisely this juncture.²²⁴ *Life of Brainerd* is a narrative in which through a Herculean spiritual effort a person afflicted with a spiritual disability nevertheless manages to succeed at securing assurance of salvation. And yet, finally, I believe the text is even more important for understanding Edwards's views on this process because Brainerd almost fails. Brainerd's melancholia complicated his ability to acquire and manifest the prudence needed to link his developing discernment to practices that would help him negotiate the unfamiliar terrain of regenerate ethico-religious striving. His melancholy was part of the complicated set of motives that kept him *away* from community. Brainerd would have highly benefited from the kind of 'trials and tribulations success story' a church elder could offer. For only someone with the specific experience of overcoming the pitfalls of post-conversion habituation could help him use prudence to overcome them in himself. The collective wisdom of a regenerate church membership form a kind of Ignatian *Spiritual Exercises*, i.e., a broad repository of trial by error knowledge to successfully gauge when mortification of pride is to be lessened in order to avoid the exacerbation of melancholy.²²⁵ Brain-

²²⁴ Danaher proposes a highly innovative and persuasive account of why Edwards was so concerned about limiting access to the Lord's Supper to the regenerate. 'Edwards' strictness concerning attendance and self-examination' he argues, 'derived even more from his high opinion of the spiritual presence at the Lord's Supper than it did from a distinct concern with conversion' ('By Sensible Signs Represented,' 281). This explanation is not fundamentally incompatible with my view that Brainerd's nearly failed attempt to secure assurance of salvation made Edwards more sensitive to how much would-be saints needed church community. Indeed, it provides an answer to the mystery (*ibid.*, 286) of '... why it took him so long to follow through the theological implications of his thought' (*ibid.*, 286). Danaher impressively documents how Edwards's 'elevation of communion, and not the covenant, as the "main thing" in which the good of the Lord's Supper consists' (*ibid.*, 287) pervades his sermons on the subject from before 1733 to as late as 1756.

²²⁵ Puritans were not without such a literature of their own, of course. See e.g., Charles E. Hambricke-Stowe, Charles E. *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press,

erd's inability accentuates what converted agents must, and normally can, achieve by their own (augmented) abilities of self-regulated habituation *within the special community* Edwards sought to create and preserve in his Northampton church.²²⁶

While Edwards wishes to make some allowances for factors outside the agent's control,²²⁷ an even more forceful invocation of responsibility follows hard upon any exemptions: '... ungodly men which live under the gospel, notwithstanding any moral sincerity they may have, are worse, and more provoking enemies to God, than the very heathen, who never sinned against gospel light and mercy.'²²⁸ The providential framework of church ordinances and whatever 'signs' of God's nature can be said to inhere in nature provide a way to '... run, not as uncertainly; [to] ... fight, not as they that beat air [I Cor. 9: 26]²²⁹ Would-be saints should seek out opportunities to try their spiritual 'gold' by the 'fire' of self-sacrifice and establish whether they possess the kind of charity only the regenerate have *via* the emanation of God's nature.²³⁰ Edwards is willing to admit, of course, that many members of the visible church will not pass this test. Failing to make use of the resources with which God has invested the providential

1982). But it is more difficult to identify one narrative that occupied the institutional stature of this foundational document of the Society of Jesus. This may not be true for nineteenth-century evangelicals, for whom, Joseph Conforti reminds us, *Life of Brainerd* was Edwards's most popular and influential work ('Jonathan Edwards's Most Popular Work,' *Church History* 54 [June 1985]: 188–201).

²²⁶ The discussion about the way parents are to blame for the apostasy of their children draws a great deal on responsibility for keeping assurance of salvation, keeping the habit of grace strong (*WJE* 12, 315–318). Again, this is, for Edwards à la Anselm, to keep grace at all, fortifying one's mind on the keeping of what grace one gets.

²²⁷ Those regenerate persons who are kept out of the church because their possession of the habit of sanctified charity was not perceived by fallible human application of his highly restrictive requirements for full church membership, for instance, are not held responsible by God for the deficiencies they suffer as a result (*WJE* 12, 298). At the Last Judgment, Edwards seems to be saying, God's mercy deems that the kind of converted agents in question made as much use of the operative resources for post-conversion habituation as they had access to and so should not be blamed for falling below an otherwise standard proportion of sanctified versus unsanctified habits. As Edwards noted in *Freedom of the Will*, '... whatever power men may be supposed to have to surmount difficulties, yet that power is not infinite; and so goes not beyond certain limits' (*WJE* 1, 157).

²²⁸ *WJE* 12, 420; see also Edwards, *The great Concern of A Watchman For Souls, appearing in the Duty he has to do, and the Account he has to give, represented & improved* (Boston: Green, Bushnell, and Allen, 1743), 29.

²²⁹ *WJE* 12, 298.

²³⁰ *WJE* 2, 93.

order, even the once converted might eventually slide further down the scale of dispositional strength until what charity they had is no longer habitual.²³¹ If this were to happen, the ‘logic of virtue’ we have traced through most of the mature published treatises, by they would thereby be allowing what assurance of salvation they had to be threatened. This is not to say that God would not ultimately end up saving those people who once apostatized, only that Edwards’s position would not give them reason to hope for salvation notwithstanding.

²³¹ *WJE* 2, 194.

CONCLUSION

The Contemporary Connotations of Virtue

In a ‘Miscellanies’ entry from the late 1730s Edwards invoked Locke’s notion of ‘simple ideas’ to reflect on where human beings’ understanding in religious matters comes from. He notes that when a person ‘... read[s] the word “sanctification,” the actual idea of which contains a great many actual ideas, viz. an actual idea of what is implied in the faculties of an intelligent voluntary being, and then an actual idea of holiness, which contains a great number of other actual ideas.’¹ Sanctification is the last of the examples Edwards considers on this occasion, and he concludes the series by noting that ‘... these [examples] might be enough to convince anyone that there is very often no actual idea of those things when we are said to think of them, and that the thought is not employed about things themselves immediately, or immediately exercised in the idea itself, but only some sign that the mind habitually substitutes in the room of the idea.’² This study has been most centrally concerned with the ‘rooms’ occupied by the term *virtue* in the Reformation’s encounter with the Enlightenment. A seventeenth-century Reformed thinker whose training included classic sixteenth-century statements of Protestant polemical debate (e.g. between Lutherans and Reformed, between different Reformed contingents, between Reformed and Anabaptist writers, and between Reformed thought and Catholicism) would not have found it at all strange to ask and spend considerable time answering how good a saved person or a ‘true Christian’ had to be. Nor would it be strange to an eighteenth-century figure like Edwards, whose training included studying the works of these seventeenth-century thinkers to do so. The ‘communion controversy’ discussed in Chapter 6 is sufficient evidence that there was an animus present in Edwards’s own audience against making this the cen-

¹ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 782, *WJE* 18, 453–454.

² ‘Miscellanies’ No. 782, *WJE* 18, 454.

tral question of the religious life. The roughly two hundred and fifty intervening years have given us more and different reasons to eschew the conceptual décor of the interconnected series of ‘rooms’ in which Edwards’s concepts of ‘sanctification,’ ‘virtue,’ ‘charity,’ ‘goodness,’ and ‘excellence’ are housed. A major figure like Edwards has not only had an impact on intellectual and socio-cultural trends of subsequent eras. His lasting significance is evinced by the manner in which many of these subsequent eras have found reasons of their own to reinterpret Edwards for their own purposes and uses. My reasons for being concerned about the moral goodness of Edwardsean saints are closely bound up with the ‘associations’ contemporary interpreters have about virtue from the contemporary ‘ethical culture.’

The ascendancy of ‘liberal Protestantism’ in the late nineteenth- and twentieth-century is perhaps the most obvious force critical of Edwardsean ‘precisionism.’ In Bultmanian or Tillichian existentialist strands thereof, the self-determination of authentic selfhood gave priority to the faith-motif of the *kerygma*. The ‘social gospel’ tradition of Walter Rauschenbush and others gave the works-motif of the *kerygma* priority, but it was an approach to Christian ethics in which determining who is saved is of much less significance than how the kingdom of God can be more effectively brought about by the church as a whole. Although his writings as a whole cannot be called theologically liberal, Paul Ramsey’s work on Edwards does exemplify the liberal Protestant approach to Christian ethics. Ramsey did the study of Edwards’s ethics an invaluable service in giving detailed attention to the manner in which *common morality* ‘both in its nature and its effects, greatly “resembles” and is “agreeable” to true virtue’³ More than anyone else, Ramsey underscored how even ‘secondary’ Edwardsean virtues like *pity* or *justice* can point to higher echelons of God’s created order.⁴ Edwards did not indeed require perfectly selfless motive in order for an act to participate in the nature of true virtue.⁵ But the result of overemphasizing this to the derogation of the fundamental difference between common morality and (regenerate) true virtue is that virtually any moral act with virtually any level of habitual permanence in the self

³ Ramsey, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ *WJE* 8, 33.

⁴ Familial loves, for instance, have partly the nature of merely natural affections but can also ‘arise from absolute or pure benevolence to God’ (Ramsey, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ 51).

⁵ *WJE* 8, 541; Ramsey, ‘Editor’s Introduction,’ 27.

could be seen to represent the moral identity of one in whom the Holy Spirit indwells. Ramsey's interpretive efforts join those many other theologians and ethicists who have tried to make Edwards more relevant by making him ore amenable to contemporary trends.

When the orthodoxy of a figure that stands as guarantor for the orthodoxy of subsequent generations of theologians is at stake, the possibilities of blending the exegetical with the proscriptive are only heightened. Edwards represented for some nineteenth- and twentieth-century interpreters a significant link with the Reformed orthodoxy of the continental Reformation;⁶ and a great deal continues to hinge upon the power and comprehensiveness of Edwards's defense of 'orthodoxy' against 'Arminianism' and other supposed heresies. The trouble with Calvinist orthodoxy, as with all orthodoxies, is that they tend to shift their meaning over time depending on the parameters of internecine splits and attacks from the outside. The polemic against 'works righteousness' was, of course, present in the Reformers and was always a part of subsequent Reformed dogmatics. But it has taken on a central role in governing the lives of Christians in the clashes of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Reformed groups with perceived secular and liberal Protestant opponents because of the changing meaning of the term. Edwards knew nothing, of course, of the neo-orthodoxy movement of which Karl Barth and Emil Brunner are two principle exemplars, nor yet of the Presbyterianism of 'the Princeton Theology' and its 'relative lack of sensitivity to historical conditioning,'⁷ nor of the Amer-

⁶ I suspect that there may be some convergent interests between a broadly 'fundamentalist' conception of Protestant orthodoxy and the kind of broadly 'neo-orthodox' conception of Protestant orthodoxy so far as the interpretation of Jonathan Edwards is concerned. See, however, George Marsden's observations on the negative appraisal of neo-orthodoxy as 'the wolf of modernism dressed in the clothes of the Lamb' made by some fundamentalists (George Marsden, *Reforming Fundamentalism: Fuller Seminary and the New Evangelicalism* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987], 98). When Princeton Seminary offered a guest professorship to Emil Brunner for the 1938–1939 academic year (*ibid.*, 101), some fundamentalists, who began to see anti-neo-orthodoxy as a 'crucial litmus test,' sought to block the appointment (*ibid.*, 110–111.).

⁷ Mark A. Noll, 'The Princeton Theology,' in *Reformed Theology in America: A History of its Modern Development*, ed. David F. Wells (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1985), 19. Noll writes that '[t]he school tended to assume that positions drawn from various Reformed sources, shaped by the questions of the nineteenth century, and applied in modern polemics were simple restatements of an undifferentiated Reformed orthodoxy.... Arguments first made by Augustine against Pelagius, by Calvin against the Council of Trent, or by Francis Turretin against his opponents in the late seventeenth century were, to them, parts of one dogmatic whole' (*ibid.*).

ican 'fundamentalism' George Marsden characterizes as a theological tradition distinct both from neo-orthodoxy and 'Reformed orthodoxy' à la Dort's 'five points.'⁸ Edwards would, I think, recognize some of his own views in the perfectionism of nineteenth-century evangelical reform groups such as the 'come-outer' 'presbygationalists' of 1840s New York,⁹ but not in the way some evangelicals have adapted neo-orthodox dogmatics.

Beyond internecine debates within Christian theology, 'virtue' also resonates with concerns in moral philosophy and secular culture that distance the contemporary reader from Edwards's intentional argumentation. The distaste for elitism within the church has corollaries, for instance, in contemporary modes of scholarship favoring popular culture over 'elite' culture and intellectual history.¹⁰ Thomas Shafer notes of some of Edwards's early notebook entries on the 'reborn and sanctified soul' were 'utterly alien in the degree of its ascetic discipline and single-minded contemplation of Deity to life as lived by most of even of his pious neighbors.'¹¹ Shafer subsequently notes that '[w]hat Edwards came to regard as his conversion was not to the kind of Christian living that most Puritan pastors would have expected of their converts, but to what the medieval church would also have called "religion", a full-time pursuit of the counsels of perfection, the moral heroism of the

⁸ George Marsden notes that in 1910 the Presbyterian General Assembly adopted a 'five point' declaration in response to questions about the orthodoxy of Union Theological Seminary: (1) inerrancy of Scripture, (2) the Virgin Birth, (3) Christ's substitutionary atonement, (4) Christ's bodily resurrection and (5) the authenticity of the miracles (*Fundamentalism and American Culture: The Shaping of Twentieth-Century Evangelicalism 1870-1925* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1980], 117). Marsden then tells us that, by mistake, these came to be known as the 'five points of fundamentalism,' which is actually something quite distinct. The second of these is identified as the deity of Christ and the fifth as a combination of the resurrection and the Second Coming (*ibid.*, 262n30). Both of these typologies should nevertheless be distinguished sharply from the 'five points' connected with the Canons of the Synod of Dort.

⁹ Carol Mattingly, *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998); Douglas M. Strong, *Perfectionist Politics: Abolitionism and the Religious Tensions of American Democracy* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1999); Lillian Taiz, *Hallelujah Lads and Lasses: Remaking the Salvation Army in America 1880-1930* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 2001). On the origins of Edwards's use among Methodists, see Richard B. Steele, 'Gracious Affection' and 'True Virtue' According to Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1994).

¹⁰ See Jon Butler, *Awash In A Sea of Faith: Christianizing the American People* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1990); David D. Hall, ed., *Lived Religion in America: Toward A History of Practice* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997).

¹¹ Thomas Shafer, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 13, 51.

monastic life and the mystic abstraction of the medieval saint.¹² Concerns about 'holier than thou' attitudes have, of course come to have much broader social meaning. In both ethics circles and theological circles concepts of virtue carry implications of political conservatism and self-enclosed communities cordoned off from the perceived vices of out-groups.¹³ Alasdair MacIntyre self-consciously adopted this posture in a quasi-apocalyptic reading of contemporary culture in which, like St. Benedict, those special few who have *per impossible* managed to maintain their virtue would band together in isolated monastic settings to wait out the 'dark ages.'¹⁴ J.B. Schneewind's classic critique of the revival of 'virtue ethics' in contemporary moral philosophy and Jeffrey Stout's recent defense of democracy as a populist and pragmatic tradition are both compelling commentaries on such a position.¹⁵ Schneewind highlights the manner in which early modern natural law theorists sought to capture the realism of the virtue approach in terms of the necessity of habituation within community but broadened that community out to cosmopolitan nations in which the socio-cultural particularities of more restrictive localities would no longer create factions damaging to natural virtues all could agree upon as rationally beneficial to common human projects.¹⁶ Stout seeks to prick the consciences of defenders of MacIntyre's view by asking what happens to those who depend upon the public sphere for support when Christian elites withdraw their backing.

An ethicist such as myself need not then appeal to a concept of supererogation in soliciting the full range of humanistic inquiry for support in restoring the original pathos in Edwards's strong insistence on how virtuous the saints really were. Scholars of many different fields may quite reliably rely upon the much more common motive of self-interest to guide them. But if there are many reasons why the concept of virtue is a focal point of religious and philosophical trajectories that

¹² Shafer, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 13, 52.

¹³ For a recent discussion of this with respect to William Bennett's writings on virtue see Randy Cohen 'The Politics of Ethics,' *Nation* 274: 13 (April 8, 2002): 21–23.

¹⁴ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981).

¹⁵ Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004).

¹⁶ On the subject of virtue as a language of morals that can create conflict see Stuart Hampshire, *Morality and Conflict* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983); Jennifer A. Herdt, *Religion and Faction in Hume's Moral Philosophy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Jeffrey Stout, *Ethics After Babel: The Languages of Morals and Their Discontents* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1988).

continue to wield influence in the contemporary public sphere, correcting the many distortions possible when a major figure like Edwards is pursued out of 'presentist' concerns will require much sharpening of our still fuzzy picture of his thought on its own terms. Significant obstacles remain within the scholarly literature that I hope this book will provide an opportunity to face squarely. I can only offer a summary account; but as it undergirds the distinctive strengths and weaknesses of the approach I have taken, it warrants inclusion within this final chapter.

The Multiple Valences of Edwardsean Virtue

It is hard to imagine attending too vigilantly to the tensions at the boundaries between the holiness motif and the justification by faith motif in Edwards's thought. This tension exists at the boundary of the moral sense and the Calvinist traditions that both exercised such an influence on his ethics. This tension is evident between different genres in the corpus (sermons, private notebooks, treatises, biography), different topics and/or polemics (revivalism, Arminianism, ecclesiology, Biblical typology), different periods, different texts, and not without some frequency, different portions of the same text. 'Miscellanies' No. 1181 is an instructive example of the latter. At one level it definitely affirms a classic Calvinist conception of the perseverance of the saints: '... [B]eing once interested in it [the righteousness of God revealed in faith],' Edwards there argues, 'we have the continuance of faith in the future persevering exercises of it made sure to us'¹⁷ But following hard upon the heels of the subsequent extrapolation that the just who live by faith 'are not of them who draw back unto perdition' comes a rhetorically charged invocation of the necessity of works and the contingent openness of failure in works.¹⁸ It is true even for Christ that 'if ... [he] had not kept the Father's commandments, he could not have continued in his love.... [and] would have been cast out of favor.'¹⁹ The subtle and fair interpreter of this entry must capture not only the two mutually affirmed possibilities but also the precise logical form of their compossibility. And this task must be moderated by careful attention to

¹⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 1188, *WJE* 23, 107.

¹⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 1188, *WJE* 23, 108.

¹⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 1188, *WJE* 23, 108.

the precise usage of individual terms within what might appear to be commonplace arguments for widely held dogmas. The trouble is that a high degree of virtue is one of the features wherein Richard A. Muller rightfully regards 'the early orthodox Reformed thinkers do not oblige the excessively neat categories of ... modern historians.'²⁰

We have seen multiple ways that divine agency can be the cause of the determination of the will (e.g., metaphysical root of election or bestowal of the self-sustaining habit of charity). There are also multiple strengths with which one can hold that God's will in human regeneration is efficacious. To make matters worse for the tidy-minded interpreter, there is the still further matter of the enormous degree of interpretive give when it comes to defending any one of these trajectories on their own as univocally definitive. For instance, despite the use of de-emphasizing good works as an indicator of salvific status noted above, Edwards argues extensively for the inextricable connection of holiness with salvific status in the 'Justification' section of the 'Controversies' notebook.²¹ The culmination of this extended reflection is his affirmation that '[i]t was from God's love to holiness and hatred of sin that God would appoint no savior but a holy Savior; no salvation but a holy salvation, and no way of salvation but a holy way.... And therefore, God's hatred of sin and love to holiness is a good evidence that ... none but those that are sincerely holy can be God's favorites'²² Bringing the exacting student of Edwards's thought almost to the state of resignation that such matters will ever be satisfactorily resolved, no fewer than three conceptually discrete qualifications of this argument come after its crescendo. It is not difficult to reconcile insisting upon the necessary relationship between a high degree of virtue and salvific status with the qualification that 'God's making holiness his end in justifying a sinner, or in contriving a method of justification, is no manner of evidence of his justifying him for the value of his holiness ... recommending him to such a benefit'²³ The indwelling of the Holy Spirit could be affirmed to be the ultimate cause of both the creation of the holiness and its continuance. But when Edwards says that '... though God in his wisdom and holi-

²⁰ Richard A. Muller, *After Calvin: Studies in the Development of a Theological Tradition*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2003. 13. Theories of covenant and predestination are the features of orthodox Reformed thought Muller thinks modern historians overly subject to contemporary theological concerns.

²¹ 'Justification,' 'Controversies' notebook, *WJE* 21, 359–361.

²² 'Justification,' 'Controversies' notebook, *WJE* 21, 365.

²³ 'Justification,' 'Controversies' notebook, *WJE* 21, 366.

ness would by no means appoint any method of justification but such as tends to promote holiness, yet this may be done if the condition of justification implies only sincere holiness, that aims and earnestly desires and seeks increase of holiness to perfection as much as is possible, and in the best manner that can be, under man's present circumstances ..., one finds at least a tinge of equivocation.²⁴ Seemingly, what is most important is the fact that holiness will come in some form, not what form it finally takes. Edwards's subsequent qualifications weaken the indissolubility of virtue and salvation from another direction still. Perseverance in holiness, he says, is adjudged and granted by God 'in the very first act of faith as though it had existed.'²⁵ There is, as we have discussed on several occasions, a 'mustard seed' mode of salvation in Edwards's thought in which high degrees of sanctification do not play a large role.

*The Problem of Canon and the Problem
of Edwards's Intellectual Development*

This book has explored the general features of how the 'moral sense' and 'Calvinism' have each been used by scholars to give content to the other. The aesthetics of the moral sense, for instance, can be put at the disposal of Calvinist soteriology in the stipulation that it is not just a nondescript faith that God exists or even a faith that God will save one that characterizes regeneration but a capacity to find God *beautiful*. 'Calvinist' metaphysics can also be put at the disposal of the aesthetics of the moral sense in the stipulation that only those who have been capacitated by the bestowal of saving grace to take delight in performing virtuous actions (find virtue beautiful).²⁶ Despite this overlap, broad currents of each type of view continue to attempt to dislodge the other. The combined results of the previous chapters demonstrate the inadequacy of each view standing on its own. If one were to allow both to stand as acceptable alternatives without qualification, however, the area conjointly demarcated is unsatisfactorily wide. To rest with the compossibility of both explanations is tantamount to admitting that by *virtue* Edwards could have meant virtually anything. The secondary literature

²⁴ 'Justification,' 'Controversies' notebook, *WJE* 21, 370–371.

²⁵ 'Justification,' 'Controversies' notebook, *WJE* 21, 371.

²⁶ *WJE* 2, 240.

discussed in the Introduction has made progress reconciling some of the more improbable antinomies. But the incompleteness of the task still leaves open a great many questions central to identifying Edwards's ethical position with any detail. Ought the formal aesthetics Calvinist faith shares with sentimentalist benevolence be governed by an overarching 'forensicness,' for instance, or is 'consent to Being' conceptually wedded to actual virtue? What does it mean to 'participate in the divine nature' in a manner that forcefully separates regenerate from unregenerate sensibilities if not the kind of visibly different behavior Edwards did not do much to qualify in his ecclesiastical writings? Does the concept of habit Edwards uses to describe how 'saints' might be identified to themselves (if not to third-party observers) break beyond the conceptual limits of what is forensic about virtue? Must 'true virtue' always be habitually expressed to be said to exist? If so, what is the threshold of consistent practice that constitutes such a criterion? Does the ability to cultivate the benevolence that is receptivity to and a participation in God's nature lie in human nature originally? Has God invested opportunities for grace freestanding within the creation or is a discrete divine act required for each case of human regeneration?²⁷

Over the last fifty years, the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* has provided an irreplaceable institutional context for scholarly exchange on these and many other matters of interpretation. Through the publication of texts restored to their original versions after centuries of significant editing liberties, erudite introductions, manuscript dating from ink and paper samples, and the dissemination of writings heretofore unpublished in their entirety, a context is gradually emerging for making some informed conjectures about the development of Edwards's thought. If the earliest editions showed a preference for classic theological and philosophical texts, the edition has during the last fifteen years become increasingly connected with historical contextualization. This historical turn has added a myriad of crucial correctives to any too easy movement between broad Calvinist loci and individual works in the Edwardsean corpus. Those connected with the edition have made it admirably clear that while ministers did use the many sermons they gave in the

²⁷ For his part, Edwards speaks in both voices on different occasions. He sometimes speaks of gracious affections as stemming from a kind of unfreedom wrought by 'the sovereign dominion of *love to God*' (*WJE* 8, 559). On other occasions, he was impressed by the manner in which some of God's spiritual and moral excellences could be 'read' in natural phenomena (*WJE* 11, 28–33).

ecclesiastical calendar for working out philosophical and theological views of 'academic' interest, it can never be forgotten that they were also indissolubly connected to the exigencies of local spiritual, social, and political concerns and were most often not conceived in terms of publication for a wider audience.²⁸ The field of Edwards studies owes a debt of gratitude to Thomas Schafer's scrupulous analysis of paper and ink samples toward the end of dating manuscripts. Georges Marsden's significant updating of the scholarly context for Edwards's biography must also garner high degrees of appreciation. Peter Theusen's forthcoming study promises the substantial contribution of making our understanding of Edwards's list of reading serve our understanding of his thought. The publication of samples from the immense diversity of private notebooks Edwards kept are also now much more widely employed in the defense of certain finer interpretative points in the more commonly known published writings.

Despite these advances, however, the state of scholarly consensus on Edwards's intellectual development is still insufficient to provide a means of reconciling the tensions from both within and between the many genres, polemics, time periods, and texts that comprise the corpus. This has been particularly poignant in my attempt to reconstitute Edwards's conception of the perseverance of the saints in Chapter 5. Even if it is itself flexible and contested, any resolutions on more narrow questions remain inconclusive, even nonsensical, without the kind of integrated framework Augustine scholars enjoy when, e.g., arguing back and forth between alternative views of the bishop's 'early position' and 'late position' on freedom of the will.²⁹ Indeed, it would not be an exaggeration to suggest that the many of hotly contested scholarly debates about Edwards's ethical position are less about the circumscribed readings of individual texts or passages than about what texts or passages can adjudicate internal tensions within interpretations and neutralizes contradictions from elsewhere in the corpus.

Particularly in Chapter 5, I have tried to make the implicit discourse of canonization lurking within the scholarship more explicit by bring-

²⁸ On the sermon genre in Edwards's time see Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986) and Wilson Kinnach, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 10, 1–258.

²⁹ See, e.g., James Wetzel, *Augustine and the Limits of Virtue* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); J. Patout Burns, *The Development of Augustine's Doctrine of Operative Grace* (Paris: Etudes Augustiniennes, 1980); and Eugene TeSelle, *Augustine the Theologian* (London: Burns & Oates, 1966).

ing out the maximum range of interpretive choice when assessing his stance on multi-genre and multi-polemic topics like assurance of salvation and secondary causality. In taking such a stance, I share Quentin Skinner's approach to what kind of general consistency we can expect to find in a comprehensive reading of a figure like Edwards. No less of Edwards than of Machiavelli I believe we can, '[i]f he upholds position (a) ... expect him to reject the negation of (a); if he commends alternative (x), we can expect him to denounce the contrary of (x); and so on.' I believe we can further assume, with Skinner, that '[i]f upon further investigation we find these expectations defeated, we shall begin to feel at a complete loss. But if we succeed in recovering just such a network of attitudes, we shall feel increasingly justified in our initial hypothesis: that, in issuing his utterance with the force of upholding and commending a certain position, he must have intended his utterance to bear exactly that force.'³⁰ While I doubt that any conclusive resolution on the kind of large doctrinal questions this book deals with are forthcoming until there is much greater scholarly consensus of the development of Edwards's thought, the 'logic of virtue' developed in the preceding chapters seeks to provide a foundation for constructing a plausible account of major transitions in Edwards's career and as such should stimulate further research in this area. Because the 'Miscellanies' run the entire course of the corpus—and so they stand the best chance of providing the crucial means of reading Edwards's views at one stage of his career against views developed at other stages—it is worth a brief sketch of how I see their trajectory correlating with the mature ethical position I have sought to set out.

Edwards's Intellectual Development Through the Lens of the 'Miscellanies'

Edwards's thought on virtue in the 'Miscellanies' begins as two unconnected streams of reflections—one in which holiness was insisted upon as essential beyond the imputation of righteousness in justification by faith and one in which the concept of holiness is inseparable from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit and the divine intention in creating and sustaining the world. The lines between them are not always distinct. Nor are incursions of one into the other ever univocal or complete.

³⁰ Skinner, 'A Reply to My Critics,' in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics* ed. James Tully (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 278.

But as the entries unfold, I believe a loose and provisional pattern does emerge wherein discussions of justification by faith shift from arguing, positively, that faith alone justifies, to negative arguments against faith ever being separated from works in those whom God grants salvation (despite the fact that faith is the only thing God looks at in granting salvation). Edwards's treatments of 'humiliation' and 'preparation' correspondingly shift from a conviction that they are not necessary given the freeness of God's grace to a recognition of the 'meetness' of (1) God's gift of faith and (2) persons showing they do not rebel against God in the consenting part of their persons and their behavior.

Entries No. 'a' to No. 522 take us from November of 1722 to no later than the end of 1732.³¹ Various features of the holiness stream find expression in the first series of 26 entries, written before Edwards's twentieth birthday, interspersed with invocations of imputed righteousness and the perseverance of the saints.³² He laments the 'strange notions of holiness' '[w]e drink in' 'from our childhood, as if it were a melancholy, morose sour and unpleasant thing.'³³ The true nature of holiness is instead 'sweet and ravishingly lovely the highest beauty and amiableness, vastly above all other beauties.'³⁴ '[A] calm ecstasy, doth it bring to the soul!'³⁵ And invoking the natural imagery he will also use to great effect in many other writings he rhapsodizes 'how do even the whole creation, the sun, the fields and trees love a humble holiness; how doth all the world congratulate, embrace, and sing to a sanctified soul!'³⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 348 highlights the unlikelihood of God's divergent excellences, e.g., holiness and justice, to be transmitted piecemeal to the regenerate soul. Instead 'every beauty should be proportionably effulgent.'³⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 375 further notes the incongruousness, inharmoniousness, and even ugliness of participating in the divine nature without commensurately enjoying 'anything of those holy, sweet, humble dispositions and motions of the heart.'³⁸ True acceptance of the offer of eternal life in justification inherently involves a 'quitting

³¹ Schafer, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 13, 91–109; Chamberlain, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 18, 44.

³² 'Miscellanies' No. 's', *WJE* 13, 174; 'Miscellanies' 'y', *WJE* 13, 176.

³³ 'Miscellanies' No. 'a', *WJE* 13, 163.

³⁴ 'Miscellanies' No. 'a', *WJE* 13, 163.

³⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 'a', *WJE* 13, 163.

³⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 'a', *WJE* 13, 163.

³⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 348, *WJE* 13, 419.

³⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 375, *WJE* 13, 447.

and parting with [sin], in our wills and inclinations.³⁹ The 'meetness' of this relationship is reaffirmed in 'Miscellanies' No. 522. Whatever 'any promises of success' there are are connected only with those that persevere in being 'thorough in seeking.'⁴⁰ In 'Miscellanies' No. 532, Edwards expresses his view that it is 'strange' to deny that Christ's 'active righteousness' is imputed to the regenerate if one holds that 'Christ's merits are imputed to us, or, which is the same thing, that he merited for us, or that we have the benefit of his merit'⁴¹ I think we have here an affirmation that 'active righteousness' is somehow conjoined with the imputation of righteousness without an account of how the two are connected.

The Calvinist stream is even more represented in this batch of entries, however, lest anyone confuse even grace *qua* gift as something the regenerate could boast about. 'Miscellanies' No. 2 stipulates that '...God is not obliged to save man because he has the grace of faith, but only as He has been pleased to make that grace the condition of salvation.'⁴² 'Miscellanies' No. 116b would seem to offer something like an integration of the two streams in that 'arbitrary grace' and 'preparation' appear in the same sentence. But when it is scrutinized more closely, the affirmation that grace is 'given entirely by the Spirit of God, by his free and most arbitrary motions' can be seen to be made without explicit consideration of the fact that God's 'ordinary method ... is to give grace to those that are much concerned about it, and earnestly and for a considerable time seek it, or continue to do things in order to it.'⁴³ Despite the occasional invocation of the 'meetness' of convictions of sin and salvation, in 'Miscellanies' No. 317 Edwards insists conversion can still be 'immediate.' Indeed, he seems to be arguing that supposing otherwise is to misunderstand the arbitrariness of God's salvific will. 'God convinces men against their nature and inclination'⁴⁴ Whereas 'God may as well sometimes keep it from working from the first ...,' that multitudes were converted by the preaching of the apostles happens '... by God's more immediately convincing them by his suppressing such a spirit of self-confidence ... not mortifying [it]'⁴⁵

³⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 504, *WJE* 18, 52.

⁴⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 522, *WJE* 18, 67.

⁴¹ 'Miscellanies' No. 532, *WJE* 18, 76.

⁴² 'Miscellanies' No. 2, *WJE* 13, 197.

⁴³ 'Miscellanies' No. 116b, *WJE* 13, 282–283.

⁴⁴ 'Miscellanies' No. 317, *WJE* 13, 398.

⁴⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 317, *WJE* 13, 398.

Edwards explicitly denies in 'Miscellanies' No. 481 many of the connections and correlations he affirmed between holiness and justification above. '... [A]lthough other things are bestowed on men by ordinary providence, that is, according to fixed laws of the succession of events from preceding events or preceding human voluntary acts; yet this [regeneration],' he says, 'has God reserved to be bestowed by himself, according to his arbitrary will and pleasure, without any stated connection, according to fixed laws, with previous voluntary acts of men, or events in the series of natural things.'⁴⁶

'Miscellanies' No. 412 represents one of the first sustained attempts in the 'Miscellanies' to integrate the ideas I have suggested are initially found most often in separate streams. Edwards begins this entry on justification by remarking that '[t]here is a great deal of ambiguity in such expressions as those which are commonly used, viz. the condition of salvation, what is required in order to salvation or justification'⁴⁷ He then enumerates three senses in which this is the case. The first is that 'Christ alone performs the condition' and the second that 'faith, or the heart's giving entertainment to Christ and the gospel, is the only condition of salvation'⁴⁸ But rather than leave the general point that holiness is part of God's emanated nature to the elect or that works must be subsequent to faith, Edwards in this entry begins to integrate holiness into broader accounts of what justification is (the third sense of salvation's conditionality). '[U]niversal and persevering obedience, and bringing forth the fruits of love to God and our neighbor,' are first offered as a sustained analysis of 'conditions of salvation ... [that] may be put into a conditional proposition'⁴⁹ Edwards concludes that it is 'unmeet' for those who are unholy to share in these benefits but only because God has 'arbitrarily' judged it to be so. There is a suggestion here that 'unholiness and gospel salvation don't suit and agree together ...' that is, but it is not developed so as to outweigh the more primordial arbitrariness of God's will.⁵⁰

There are comparatively few affirmations of the holiness stream in the entries from No. 534 to No. 790, covering the period from approximately 1732 to early to mid 1738.⁵¹ 'Miscellanies' No. 683 offers over

⁴⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 481, *WJE* 13, 523.

⁴⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 412, *WJE* 13, 471.

⁴⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 412, *WJE* 13, 471–472.

⁴⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 412, *WJE* 13, 472.

⁵⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 412, *WJE* 13, 473.

⁵¹ Chamberlain, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 18, 46–47.

four pages of reflection on the saints as uniquely partaking of the divine nature. It includes, among other things, 'partaking of Christ's holiness and grace, his nature, inclinations, tendencies, affections, love, [and] desires'⁵² 'Miscellanies' No. 739 pursues the ethical distinctiveness of these affections. 'A true disciple of Christ,' he insists, '... loves Christ above father and mother, and wife and children, houses and lands, yea, than his own life'⁵³ More common by far are lengthy expositions of justification by faith and its 'freeness' (No. 659, No. 669, No. 671, No. 673). Some invocations can be found of the 'immediateness' of the witness of the spirit contrary to what in Chapter 2 I suggested was his mature position on the practical syllogism.⁵⁴ Entry No. 539 acknowledges that it is not impossible for God to work salvation without the deliberate pursuit of holiness, but still insists that '[i]f there could be a principle of grace in the heart without' what he calls 'notions or ideas that the mind is furnished with, of the things of religion; or of God, Christ, the future world, the saints, the attributes of God, the works of God, those things that Christ has done and suffered, etc', it remains the case that such grace still '... could not act, because it could have no matter to act upon.'⁵⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 688 underscores the regenerate as 'not worthy in themselves, yet ... worthy in Christ,'⁵⁶ but in the background is, nevertheless, the affirmation that their valuableness is nevertheless a 'moral valuableness.'⁵⁷ Even here, however, qualifications are made. 'Miscellanies' No. 712 affirms that our moral suitability for acceptance into actual union with Christ stems from a prior natural suitability that arises out of the imputation of righteousness. 'Goodness or loveliness' is evident in the regenerate, then, but it 'is not prior in the order of nature to justification, or is not to be considered as prior in the order and method of God's proceeding in this affair.'⁵⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 689 raises the question of the visible covenant being inseparable from the invisible covenant, but the question is raised in a manner that is not explicitly connected to the kind of issues more commonly discussed under my characterizations of the holiness and Calvinist streams (e.g., secondary causality, the practical syllogism).

⁵² 'Miscellanies' No. 683, *WJE* 18, 247.

⁵³ 'Miscellanies' No. 739, *WJE* 18, 364–365.

⁵⁴ 'Miscellanies' No. 686.

⁵⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 539, *WJE* 18, 85.

⁵⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 688, *WJE* 18, 250.

⁵⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 688, *WJE* 18, 251.

⁵⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 712, *WJE* 18, 341.

Miscellanies No. 790 does reflect a substantive attempt to integrate the holiness and justification by faith motifs. The entry begins with the affirmation that 'good fruits, or good works and keeping Christ's commandments, are the evidences by which we are chiefly and most safely and surely to be determined'⁵⁹ Passages from the gospel of John and the first letter of John are then cited in support, with subsequent passages from Matthew, the Pauline epistles and the Hebrew Scriptures. This is one of the places where the concept of perseverance was filled out in terms of obedience through trials rather than faith alone. But the lengthy entry concludes by affirming such obedience was not evidence of faith in the manner of an isolatable co-condition but itself a modality of faith. '... [W]hen FAITH is insisted on as the great CONDITION OF SALVATION,' he writes, 'practical exertions and effective expressions of faith, appearing when faith is thus tried, are mainly pointed at.'⁶⁰ But just as one gets the feeling that works are so much an aspect of faith that a justification not inherently sanctified no longer makes sense, he returns once again to affirm the efficacy of 'the immediate testimony of the Spirit of God himself to our souls that we are the children of God, and the seal of the Spirit'⁶¹ Nevertheless, when he says that 'the witness of the Spirit of adoption or love is the highest evidence of our good estate' and that 'keeping Christ's commands is the highest evidence of a good estate' 'for they are both the same,'⁶² the holiness motif is his being subsumed within the justification by faith motif not the other way around.

There are many more affirmations of the justification by faith stream than the holiness stream in the entries from No. 790 to No. 847, covering the period from early 1739 to mid 1740.⁶³ Miscellanies No. 817, No. 818, and No. 820 do represent significant exceptions, however. 'Miscellanies' No. 817 affirms that there are 'degrees of grace and holiness' among the saints, a manner of noting the differences among justified persons that Calvin would not have registered to the same extent.⁶⁴ In 'Miscellanies' No. 818, the autonomy of the human will as a secondary cause of grace is gaining in force and poignancy out from under a con-

⁵⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 790, *WJE* 18, 474–476.

⁶⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 790, *WJE* 18, 485.

⁶¹ 'Miscellanies' No. 790, *WJE* 18, 486.

⁶² 'Miscellanies' No. 790, *WJE* 18, 487.

⁶³ Chamberlain, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 18, 47; Pauw, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 20, 35–36.

⁶⁴ 'Miscellanies' No. 817, *WJE* 18, 527.

cept of God's agency as univocally efficient in regeneration. There is something in '[t]he exercises and operations of this Spirit' that 'shows it [to] be something supernatural, not only in such a sense as to be a principle besides all the principles of human nature as such, but also so as to be above all nature, above all laws of any nature'⁶⁵ And yet, Edwards continues, it acts 'after the manner of a natural principle or seed, and yet after the manner of a voluntary agent'⁶⁶ In 'Miscellanies' No. 820, we start to see some instances where faith is being redescribed in terms of elements of the holiness motif rather than the other way around. Love, for instance, is characterized as 'of the essence of faith, yea ... the very life and soul of it, and the most essential thing in it.'⁶⁷ It is also noteworthy that a few of the invocations of the justification by faith stream seem to show a mobility towards the holiness stream. No. 831 still affirms the arbitrariness of God's selecting any human traits as the particular way in which 'persons should become interested in this Savior' but nevertheless asks whether it is sensible to suppose that God didn't have anything important in mind in making the particular connections that obtain, such that 'no one way is in itself more fit than another, and more agreeable to things as thus already constituted, so that there can be no more suitableness in appointing one than another.'⁶⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 845 is pushing outward from within a strict imputation-based or 'propitiary' exegesis of the death and blood of Christ to a conception more open to overtones of the concept of inherent righteousness discussed in Chapter 2. It 'certainly signifies something more than being set at liberty from hell;' he insists, 'it signifies also their being brought into a relation to God as his, into a covenant relation, whereby he is their God and they are his people'⁶⁹ Edwards is not yet ready here to show that such inclusion in the covenant creates virtue; he stops short of that by affirming merely that 'the redemption of Christ does consist in his positive righteousness as much as his propitiation.'⁷⁰ The righteousness being discussed is Christ's not the human recipient's. But this will be the next step in describing the effect of the human-divine relationship created in the 'blood sacrifice.'

⁶⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 818, *WJE* 18, 529.

⁶⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 818, *WJE* 18, 529.

⁶⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 820, *WJE* 18, 531.

⁶⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 831, *WJE* 18, 544.

⁶⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 845, *WJE* 20, 65.

⁷⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 845, *WJE* 20, 66.

In a modest way, still leaning in the direction of the justification by faith stream, substantial entry No. 847 gives an indication from this attenuated period of a year and a half of where Edwards's thought will be moving in subsequent entries. The extended attention given to the contours of conversion and regeneration lasting a lifetime, for instance, is a marked departure from the 'immediate' conception of faith and assurance of salvation assumed in prior entries. '[T]he whole of the saving work of God's Spirit on the soul in the beginning, and progress of it from the very first dawnings of divine light and the first beginnings of divine life until death,' he stipulates, 'is in some respect to be looked upon as all one work of regeneration'⁷¹ This is certainly partly the point Calvin might make about gradual sanctification being needful for the enormity of the gift of justification to be appreciated by an even remotely grateful sinner. But a moderate change in the nature of faith itself is also underway. What constitutes the conversion of the soul—the 'first act of faith' wherein the change from unregenerate to regenerate takes place—now includes holiness in its very first stirrings. 'The first clear discovery of God and Christ to the soul, when it follows the more obscure dawnings of grace and feebler actings of faith in holy desires after Christ and holiness,' Edwards writes in a reflection on Scriptural precedents loosely connected to Mark 10: 51–52, 'seem to be sometimes represented as their conversion.'⁷² When at the end of the entry he concludes that '[t]he condition of justification in a sense remains still to be performed, even after the first conversion, and the sentence of justification in a sense remains still to be passed, and the man remains still in a state of probation for heaven, which could not be, if his justification did not still depend on what remained to be done,'⁷³ I believe we have a good indication that it is not just spiritual states like a worshipful love of Christ but an at least partially moral dimension that Edwards is taking into his account of conversion.

The series of entries from No. 847 to No. 1092 cover the period from mid 1740 to perhaps around 1747—the period during which my account of the published writings suggest he solidified his mature view on many questions of polemical theology.⁷⁴ This period is marked by substantial entries from both streams. He depicts a moral dimension

⁷¹ 'Miscellanies' No. 847, *WJE* 20, 70.

⁷² 'Miscellanies' No. 847, *WJE* 20, 72.

⁷³ 'Miscellanies' No. 847, *WJE* 20, 74.

⁷⁴ Pauw, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 20, 36–37.

of justification in 'Miscellanies' No. 855 'confessing ... Christ ..., and adhering to our duty to him, as exposed to suffering, reproach and persecution' to be 'a disposition and practice ... of the essence of saving faith.'⁷⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 862 is a substantive exposition of the need to 'forsake the world' as necessary to a 'saving close with Christ.'⁷⁶ Part of this invocation involves a substantive embracing of suffering, 'having the heart beat off or forced off from the world by affliction' and 'renouncing the world to trust in Christ only as the means and fountain of our happiness'⁷⁷ We also see movement toward the center from what had previously been more extreme statements of resistance against making such moral duties incumbent upon would-be saints for assurance. In No. 877, he 'wholly den[ies]' that this qualification 'does in the least degree, or in any respect whatsoever, detract from the absolute freeness of God's grace in justification'⁷⁸ But he regards it as 'an absurd assertion' that we should regard as the meaning of 'arbitrary,' once a ballast of the justification by faith stream, as '... a constitution without any guidance of divine wisdom directing to that which was fit and suitable to be done'⁷⁹ The 'meetness' of regeneration and a high degree of virtue is being enhanced. In invoking the inseparability of faith and repentance, it is repentance that is stipulated as 'a certain exercise of faith in Jesus Christ' and not the other way around.⁸⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 913 straightforwardly affirms the doctrine of imputed righteousness. But then the other side of the equation gets significant airing too. 'Miscellanies' No. 996 straightforwardly advocates the importance of works in the life of faith. 'Our act of closing with and accepting of Christ is not in all respects completed by our accepting him with our hearts till we have done it practically too,' he insists '... regeneration is of the whole man'⁸¹ No. 1003 affirms a fairly straightforwardly Thomistic conception of infused grace as a cooperation of first and secondary causes. 'Miscellanies' No. 1029 pulls back from the view that the infusion of grace is a cooperative venture, however, and stipulates instead that 'grace is infused by God,

⁷⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 855, *WJE* 20, 82.

⁷⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 862, *WJE* 20, 86.

⁷⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 862, *WJE* 20, 90–91.

⁷⁸ 'Miscellanies' No. 877, *WJE* 20, 120.

⁷⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 877, *WJE* 20, 120.

⁸⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 943, *WJE* 20, 202.

⁸¹ 'Miscellanies' No. 996, *WJE* 20, 324.

and is from his arbitrary, efficacious operation⁸² ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1030 affirms justification and sanctification as two covenants made with the same God whereas ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1052 reverts back to a fairly straightforward invocation of justification by faith.

Two passages exemplify the conceptual midpoint of this period of entries and their directionality towards future entries. ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1070 is notable because of the emanation motif’s forceful reassertion from within the justification by faith motif whereas it had more commonly been asserted separately. The entry asks ‘what is and what is not contrary to the freeness of grace, and tending to detract from it?’⁸³ and begins by arguing that freeness may be more or less. What makes freeness more or less is the degree of attractiveness or potential for reciprocity in the recipient motivating the bestowal. If, in the emanation of ‘fullness’ or a ‘benevolent disposition,’ God had a prior perception of a human agent’s ‘beauty,’ ‘excellence,’ or ‘goodness’—all terms with primary affiliation with the holiness motif—then the ‘arbitrariness’ or freeness of God’s grace—both terms associated with the justification by faith motif—is reduced. But Edwards forcefully argues that this is not the case. He insists that provided that the benevolence is bestowed not because of any prior act of benevolence in the agent, then not even the entirety of God’s benevolence, fullness, holiness or virtue being bestowed in the regenerative emanation of divine perfections violates the doctrine of justification by faith. ‘None,’ Edwards presumes, for instance, ‘... will say the latter, viz. that it is inconsistent with the freeness of gospel grace for God so to constitute or appoint things that any sorrow or trouble must precede future happiness, as in any respect prerequisite to it.’⁸⁴ This sweeps away, then, any theological problems having to do with insistence upon mortification or humiliation that have concerned Edwards in earlier entries. ‘Hence,’ he says, ‘we may learn how to answer any such a question as this, that any might be ready to ask, viz. *Ques.* Why are we said to be saved by grace without works, since our works and labor are prerequisite in order to our going to heaven, as much as if heaven were given for the virtue and amiableness of our works?’⁸⁵ ‘Christian practice and the acts of an holy life are also in some sort the condition of salvation,’ he answers, though

⁸² ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1029, *WJE* 20, 366.

⁸³ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1070, *WJE* 20, 447.

⁸⁴ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1070, *WJE* 20, 452.

⁸⁵ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1070, *WJE* 20, 452–453.

'not as recommending to salvation by their moral value, but only as the exertions and expressions of the soul's acceptance of and adherence and union to the Savior.'⁸⁶ Contrary to the arbitrariness insisted upon in 'Miscellanies' No. 1070, the strong presence of the emanation theory of God's regenerative activity in 'Miscellanies' No. 1092 makes it un-arbitrary that '... those whose hearts entirely receive and activity unite with Christ should be looked upon as being indeed one with him rather than others, whose hearts are alienated from him and reject him'⁸⁷

The period of entries from No. 1092 to No. 1263 take Edwards from roughly 1747 well into the post-1751 Stockbridge years.⁸⁸ The remaining entries of the Northampton pastorate are replete with entries expressive of the 'holiness' stream. In No. 1096 Edwards accentuates the 'fitness' of certain sorts of feelings with being justified by faith in a manner seeking distance from pervious statements of the 'arbitrariness' of grace. It is qualities more connected to the reality of grace's presence that are implied in this concept of fitness, not merely 'as he might have done a man's being of such a stature, or of such colored hair, or any other indifferent thing, that does in no respect qualify the subject, nor has in itself no sort of relation to an union with Christ, or disunion from him.'⁸⁹ This is also how I read Edwards's in some sense puzzling reflection on the metaphysical priorities of truth versus love in 'Miscellanies' No. 1123. When he argues that 'the law of truth is more general and original and stands in the place of the root, and the law of love is one of the branches from that root or common stock' I regard it as a point about love's investiture in the firmament of the nature of things rather than an any arbitrary expression of God's volitional activity.⁹⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 1127 is an even earlier expression of the kind of communication of holiness we see fully developed in the *Two Dissertations*. When the regenerate 'receive from the divine goodness ... [and] have holiness conferred upon them by God' it 'give[s] 'em a sense of the beauty of holiness'⁹¹ What is interesting is that, contrary to a straightforward transition from one motif's primacy to the others, Edwards also seems more inclined to return to more or less straightforward invocations of the justification by faith stream in

⁸⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 1070, *WJE* 20, 453.

⁸⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 1092, *WJE* 20, 480.

⁸⁸ Pauw, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 20, 38.

⁸⁹ 'Miscellanies' No. 1096, *WJE* 20, 483.

⁹⁰ 'Miscellanies' No. 1123, *WJE* 20, 495.

⁹¹ 'Miscellanies' No. 1127, *WJE* 20, 498.

the Stockbridge years. References to the holiness stream are far from absent, but share the stage with substantive counter-claims. This makes the integrative efforts of these later entries all the more interesting and poignant. With some minimal qualifications, we have in the first place severe limitations being placed on the freedom that will become a part of the treatise on this subject, some of the still substantive entries on the perseverance of the saints—wherein perseverance is perseverance in faith—and some fairly straightforward invocations of imputed righteousness and justification by faith.

Both entries No. 1129 and No. 1130 reflect integrative attempts. No. 1129 affirms that ‘God saw fit that sanctification itself and the whole of salvation, excepting the very first act of faith, should be given as the consequence of faith, and as dependent on it as the condition of all.’⁹² In its discussion of obedience created by the forgiveness of sin in the elect, No. 1130 moves from the opposite direction in arguing that ‘the true nature of justifying faith, and ... the essence of it lies very much in the approbation and acceptance of the heart.’⁹³ But neither is as substantial an effort as ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1263, several pages of which received extended consideration in Chapter 3. The entry includes, it will be remembered, various rhapsodic praises sung to the ‘arbitrariness’ of Jesus and the angels in the ascending order of creation. But when he returns at the end of the lengthy entry to describe God as encompassing the history of the creation in some kind of unified volition, the discourse of arbitrariness cannot displace the discourse of love as the divine nature.

A brief analysis of ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1354 must suffice as a summary of the span of entries from ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1263 to the end of Edwards’s life which support my portrait of Edwards’s maturity. This lengthy and important passage includes forceful invocations of both the holiness streams and the Calvinist streams. At the outset, ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1354 would seem to set itself up to exposit a fairly standard conception of justification by faith alone. And yet, almost immediately, Edwards seems to admit the awkwardness of leaving out the Hebraic covenantal requirements of obedience to God and love of neighbor from the equation. I read his subsequent insistence upon the antecedent nature of obedience within the covenantal promise as an insistence that unless you love God and neighbor you are excluded from the covenant.

⁹² ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1129, *WJE* 20, 505–506.

⁹³ ‘Miscellanies’ No. 1130b, *WJE* 20, 510.

Edwards concludes the expository portion of the entry with an admission that these passages offer plausible objections to the doctrine of justification by faith and a resolution for more deliberately reconciling the two. This resolution has three phases.

Edwards's initial movements in the direction of expressing a correlation of the justification by faith and holiness motifs gives the former the larger portion. Such a reading opens out from the notion that the Old Testament's threatening of punishment for disobedience is consonant with a chastening of the human inability to earn God's love. But it cannot be conclusive because both regenerate Christians and Jews are called to obedience subsequent to being chosen for participation in the covenant despite failures to live up to the covenant antecedent to being chosen. The second phase of the resolution focuses on covenanted obedience in the Hebrew Scriptures revealing the willingness to 'yield to God' that indicates the virtues of both faith and charity. The invocation of the latter comes with at least a hint of the emanation language closely associated with the holiness stream in the *Two Dissertations* Edwards is preparing for publication sometime during this late Stockbridge period. '[L]oving and obeying Christ, or hearkening to him' are basically equated with faith, 'the special condition of life and happiness,' both of which are, in turn, connected with 'accepting of and cleaving to the great Author, fountain and means of life and happiness.'⁹⁴ In the several pages devoted to this theme, again and again in different forms, the moral excellences of the saints are nevertheless referred to 'as descriptions of the persons exhibiting their distinguishing character and sure marks'⁹⁵ In the third phase of the reconciliation, Edwards seeks to remove what Reformed opprobrium there remains in the Old Testament concept of obedience as a condition of 'life' by citing the importance of visible signs in the 'national covenant' component of the Israelite moral code. It is crucial to note that Edwards draws upon staples from the holiness motif to drive this phase of the reconciliation home. Edwards preserves important elements of the justification by faith stream in stipulating that 'the holiness of faith and evangelical compliance with the Savior is not [that] which recommends the person to a justified state, and in itself is not considered sufficient to do anything towards it' but this comes in advance of a strong state-

⁹⁴ 'Miscellanies' No. 1354, in *WJE* 23, 523.

⁹⁵ 'Miscellanies' No. 1354, in *WJE* 23, 525.

ment of the inseparability of holiness from justification.⁹⁶ '[T]hat God is an infinitely holy and wise God' is given by Edwards as 'a reason why he would contrive no way but such an one as secured and promoted holiness, and therefore would appoint no terms of salvation but such as implied holiness, or an agreement with the infinitely holy heart of God.'⁹⁷ By denying that any situation could develop wherein the unvirtuous could be saved Edwards has gone the furthest yet to restrict the scope of the justification by faith stream so as to accommodate the holiness stream.

Reading Edwards Against Himself

The continued force of the dichotomy between theology and moral philosophy and the subsequent displacement of the ethical writings to a separate genre within the Edwardsean corpus should worry ethicists, theologians, and church historians alike. For the puzzle of what Edwards meant by *virtue* is at the heart not only of his ethics but of a great many strands of his thought. The religious ethics scholar—by trade, interested in how religious ideas interact with arguments for certain forms of life against others—has a crucial contribution to make in sorting out how the various strands of thought making up Edwards's conception of virtue intersect. It must be pieced together from diverse sources; and there are multiple meanings to be sifted through. But the close integration of historical context with critical analysis of Edwards's arguments across multiple genres, polemics, periods, and texts give some weight to the supposition that it remains possible to bring the concepts made available by the moral sense tradition, the Reformed tradition, Cambridge Platonism, Protestant scholasticism, and what overlaps exist between Puritanism and Separatist-Anabaptist traditions into a generally coherent counterpoise. I see Edwards as complexly heir to the diverse Protestant virtue tradition that spans geographically from America to the continent and spans theologically on either side of the Reformed movement from latitudinarian Anglicism to a full-bodied separatism. I further see in Edwards the prominence of Aristotelian and Neoplatonic concepts long appropriated by 'the schoolmen' for describing the saintly life and not entirely abandoned by Protestants despite

⁹⁶ 'Miscellanies' No. 1354, *WJE* 23, 532.

⁹⁷ 'Miscellanies' No. 1354, *WJE* 23, 533.

strong polemical differences in dogmatics. At the same time, such ideas are moderated through still other forms of Protestant conceptions of virtue. Even though, for Edwards, saints were habituated into more and more pure forms of charity—and thus, higher and higher echelons of the divine nature—through the trials of counteracting a resistant world, his connection with seventeenth-century Reformed thought cannot be severed such that an unmerited bestowal of grace in conversion is abandoned. My reading of Edwards has sought to make plausible that over the centuries a nexus of ideas came together where the overtones of the Aristotelian virtue tradition latent in Protestant scholasticism, when they came into contact with shared features with the radical Separatist wing of the English Reformation, were exponentially amplified.

The status of this concatenation of texts and contexts, like any other comprehensive reading of a major figure with Edwards's prolific output, is subject to the mechanisms of canonization. Those statements asserting some range for the integrity of the human will as a secondary causes of grace, for instance, are greatly outnumbered by significantly more strenuous invocations of God's efficacious will in the assemblage of unpublished writings surrounding the 'Controversies' notebooks. Should we then assume that such is the case of the corpus as a whole, of Edwards's mature position? Should Edwards's non-philosophical account of David Brainerd's search for assurance of salvation be allowed to weigh in as an authoritative source for reconciling the philosophical complexities of his views on secondary causality and perseverance? The issues involved in such assessments are not merely niceties of intellectual hoop-jumping adorning the playground of Edwards devotees. I am convinced that one cannot even formulate the rudiments of Edwards's position on baseline issues in Reformed theology without privileging some texts or ideas and relegating others to less consequential peripheries. The previous schema of the 'Miscellanies' is an attempt to make the hermeneutics which generates my reading more transparent. I have done a good deal of corroboration between genres to try to overcome it; but it remains for me to argue for this means of approaching Edwards's ethics. Some will no doubt criticize me, for instance, for having made Edwards more systematic on these questions than he really was by arguing that what may only appear to be different genres or polemical topics can actually reflect certain continuities. Admittedly, there is a sense in which the progression of 'Miscellanies' entries I have used to support my reading does not constitute a coherent 'text' at all, but only a list of reflections on dis-

parate subjects interspersed with weeks and months of silence. Skinner speaks of over-systemitizing as a distorting vice in the interpreter who insists on collecting the regrettably “scattered” thought of some classic writer and presenting them systematically, or on discovering some level of coherence at which the efforts and confusions which ordinarily mark the activity of thinking are made to disappear.⁹⁸ I agree that it would also be silly to expect a thinker who tackled problems as large as Edwards’s did, however creative he may have been, never to contradict himself. I have all along the way considered much contrary evidence, ambiguities, and internal inconsistencies in constructing my vision of Edwards’s ethical position. But it should be clear by now that I have regarded at least some of these as possible to overcome on the basis of the ‘logic of virtue’ by which mature and published texts and arguments are bound to each other in such a way as to be distinguishable from at least a modicum of early and unpublished sources. Some of the counterevidence I have subjected to Skinner’s general comfort level with ‘... reconciling the claim that we need to be able to characterize a writer’s intentions in order to interpret the meaning of his works with the claim that it may sometimes be appropriate to discount his own statements about them.’⁹⁹ I think it appropriate to briefly defend the hermeneutic of reading Edwards against himself while I seek to summarize and press the advantages of the results it has obtained.

One of the main hermeneutical competitors of my vision of Edwards’s mature ethical position is the defense of a particular theological and/or philosophical interpretation largely independent of polemical context or a conception of Edwards’s development over time. Some contemporary studies, in my view, go seriously astray by disproportionately relying upon the obscure, early, and occasional writings to dislodge the most abiding, mature and prominently published.¹⁰⁰ Part

⁹⁸ Skinner, ‘Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas,’ *History and Theory: Studies in the Philosophy of History* 8, No. 1 (1969): 30.

⁹⁹ Quentin Skinner, ‘Motives, Intention, and the Interpretation of Texts,’ in *Meaning and Context: Quentin Skinner and His Critics*, ed. James Tully (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1988), 77.

¹⁰⁰ Cherry’s work continues to set the highest standard of comprehensiveness for future scholarship. And yet, it must be pointed out on those occasions when he seeks to pull his interpretation back towards the fairly narrow Calvinism that serves as his standard of Protestant orthodoxy, he sometimes cites early sermons and discourses against mature treatises. After describing the importance of love in Edwards’s understanding of the life of faith (in which he rightfully focuses on the *Religious Affections*), for example, he returns to the early work ‘Justification By Faith Alone’ (*The Theology of*

of the impetus for this hermeneutic is the assumption that in defending 'Calvinism,' even if he adapted aspects of that tradition to his own specifications, Edwards was defending something fundamentally determinate and stationary. While I have found reason myself to challenge the 'dispositional ontology' of Sang Lee and admire Stephen R. Holmes's courage in taking on such an influential theory so forcefully, the rationale for part of Holmes's critique expresses just such a univocal view of Calvinism, and worse, of Edwards's determinate and stationary position in defending it. 'No attentive reader,' Holmes writes, 'can be unaware of a basic theological conservatism within Edwards's thought: he inherited a relatively stable Reformed tradition of theology, which he knew well, generally upheld, and where he made minor amendments was both clear and defensive about the fact. This tradition,' Holmes continues, 'contained its points of controversy, of course, which Edwards naturally addressed, but in doing so he accepted that the questions were indeed the ones bequeathed to him, and generally (from his MA thesis on) defended the more traditional position.'¹⁰¹ By taking the view that Edwards's changed his mind in both subtle and not so subtle ways over the years, my account has the advantage of showing a richer sense of the lively debate Calvinists carried out both among themselves and with theological and philosophical sparring partners outside the Reformed orbit. The trouble I have taken in each chapter to show Edwards wrestling with aspects of his Puritan inheritance in historically different polemical contexts in different ways at different times also dis-

Jonathan Edwards, 126–142). Cherry's emphasis on faith in the promises of salvation in the encounter with the word (*ibid.*, 143–163) is disproportionate to the role of this idea in the major treatises of Edwards's mature corpus. A strong preference for early and unpublished writings over mature published writings can also be documented in Sang Lee's *Philosophical Theology of Jonathan Edwards*. Of the references to the 'Miscellanies' entries, roughly 85 % are from the pre-1740 period. Of the references to 'The Mind,' roughly 85 % are to entries from 1731 and earlier (when indeed most were written). References to these two sources, by themselves, constitute roughly half of the textual support in the entire book. Only about 25 % of the total references to Edwards's works are to mature published writings (*Two Dissertations*, *Religious Affections*, *Original Sin*, and *Freedom of the Will*). When references to such early writings as 'Things to Be Considered and Written Fully About' (*WJE* 6, 219–295), 'Of Atoms' (*WJE* 6, 208–218), and 'Of Being' (*WJE* 6, 202–207) are added to the mix, cross-listing these statistics yields the revealing proportion of roughly twice as many texts being cited from pre-1740 unpublished writings as were cited from major mature treatises.

¹⁰¹ Stephen R. Holmes, 'Does Jonathan Edwards Use a Dispositional Ontology? A Response to Sang Hyun Lee,' in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003), 101.

pels the further uncritical assumption that as a prescient genius, every thought (even at the age of twenty) is equally valuable because equally prophetic. George Marsden's new biography speaks volumes about the importance of seeing Edwards 'as a real person in his own time.'¹⁰²

Detailed contextualization of a narrow genre, range of texts and/or phase in Edwards's intellectual development is a second hermeneutical competitor to the approach that undergirds my own reading. It is surely the task of the *Works of Jonathan Edwards* to promote the importance of each level of the writings of this influential author from adolescent papers, marginalia and sketches of arguments written on scraps to major published treatises. And one cannot fault those charged with the promulgation of authoritative editions of texts that are still being circulated in highly adulterated editions for promulgating them too successfully. The grouping of divergent texts around a common theme—e.g., the ecclesiastical writings, the revival writings, the scientific and philosophical writings, the typological writings, the writings on the trinity, grace, and faith—as well as the grouping of sermons, discourse, and notebooks into dated batches has added exponentially to the detail of our knowledge of meaningfully discrete areas of Edwards's thought and career.

While it does not carry with it the direct threat of distortion that attributions of ahistorical theological orthodoxy or philosophical univocality do, this 'historical turn' has nevertheless indirectly created challenges for the Edwards scholar precisely because of the manifold corrective benisons it has offered. On the one hand, in productively raising the level of skepticism about over-generalizations in between genres, polemics, and periods, such an approach runs the risk of diverting attention away from the remarkable extent Edwards did carry through many foundational building blocks of his thought from the early portion of his career to his maturity. As far as the ethics is concerned, one cannot help but notice the powerful affinities between the 1738 sermon series *Charity and Its Fruits*, the short discourse 'Treatise on Grace' Thomas Shafer estimates to have been written between 1739 and 1743,¹⁰³ and the *Two Dissertations*, which Paul Ramsey dates as con-

¹⁰² George Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2003), 2.

¹⁰³ Paul Ramsey, 'Editor's Introduction,' *WJE* 8, 10. The 'Treatise on Grace' was first published privately (only 300 copies) in 1865 by Alexander B. Grosart in a collection entitled *Selections from the Unpublished Writings of Jonathan Edwards of America* (1865).

ceptually complete during 1753–1754.¹⁰⁴ With a few important qualifications, many of these same themes are present even earlier in the ‘Notes on the Mind’ notebook Edwards kept on and off for over twenty years separately from the ‘Miscellanies.’¹⁰⁵ At the same time, shortening the temporal context and narrowing the social, cultural, and intellectual context of individual texts can, ironically, allow outdated master-narratives to go unchallenged. It is finally only by means of confrontation with multi-genre, multi-text, multi-polemic evidence (such as I have offered about Edwards’s conception of virtue in this book) that multi-text, multi-polemic assumptions (such as Edwards’s unswervingly adopted Synod of Dort Calvinism) can be effectively countered. The scholarly introductions to each of the four volumes of ‘Miscellanies,’ highly valuable for the themes particular to distinct decades in Edwards’s career, illustrate this danger.¹⁰⁶ The context provided by Amy Plantinga Pauw, for instance, was well chosen to cover a period from the very eve of the Great Awakening into Edwards’s Stockbridge pastorate, a period I have suggested his mature position on many questions were consolidated. And Pauw is highly aware that these notebooks ‘were an important site for Edwards’s theological experimentation, a place where he continually restated and refined his major ideas and arguments.’¹⁰⁷ But without being able to compare transi-

¹⁰⁴ *WJE* 8, 8. Among them are the affirmation that the divine nature is communicated to human beings in regeneration by the indwelling and/or infusion of the Holy Spirit (Paul Helm, *Treatise on Grace and other posthumously published writings* [Cambridge & London: James Clarke & Co, 1971], 38, 45, 47, 55, 58.), the Johannine invocation of love as both the expression of and the fundamental nature of this regenerative state (‘Treatise on Grace,’ ed. Helm, 40–41, 44, 57), and the qualitative difference between those who possess this regenerative love and those who might possess ‘common’ semblances (‘Treatise on Grace,’ ed. Helm, 27ff).

¹⁰⁵ *WJE* 6, 332–393.

¹⁰⁶ Thomas A. Shafer, ed., *The ‘Miscellanies,’ ‘a’-500*, Vol. 13 of *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994); Ava Chamberlain, ed., *The ‘Miscellanies,’ 501–832*, Vol. 18, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); Amy Plantinga Pauw, ed., *The ‘Miscellanies,’ 833–1152*, Vol. 20, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002); Douglas Sweeney, ed., *The ‘Miscellanies,’ 1153–1360*, Vol. 23, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004). I am deeply grateful to Kenneth Minkema for making a working copy of the most germane entries from this final period available to me in advance of the latter’s publication.

¹⁰⁷ Pauw, ‘Editor’s Introduction’ (*WJE*, 20, 1).

tions from within 1740–1751 to pre-1740 positions, pre-1730 positions and post-1751 positions, some of the background against which these solidifications appear as different answers to the same questions, the same answers to different questions, or different answers to different questions is removed. If, in turn, one's sense of doctrinal and philosophical movement is reduced within the context of one period, might one then not be less inclined to see movement between other periods or between other genres in the corpus? As noted above and in the previous chapters, whether explicitly or implicitly, scholars privilege one concatenation of intransigent core and shifting periphery in assessing how to adjudicate tensions and clarify ambiguities within even the same text or context.

By moving back and forth between micro-context of text, period, genre, and polemic, on the one hand, and macro-context of dogmatic categories on the other, my integration of historical and philosophical methodologies hopes to have made progress in both the fine-tuning of broader developmental narratives of Edwards's relationship to Calvinist staples and to have illuminated the arguments of specific texts and polemics. In so doing, I have run the risk of confounding legitimate and productive demarcations of scholarly territory, e.g., theology, philosophy, history. Even the most sympathetic of commentators will wish to fine-tune the logic I have proposed. I look forward to this further conversation. In the meantime, I hope that that my clarification of issues from a space between all three of these fields will give those specialists working inside each a reason to forgive my many intrusions. Whether my hope relies upon special pleading for a project that overreaches its proper scope or, given the difficulty of the task, a justified expectation of approbation on the basis of only moderate success, I must leave to time and the judgment of others. A general summary of the broad humanistic payoff we get from these clarifications of Edwards's ethical position must be my final word.

Edwards's Continuing Significance

It does not take preternatural powers to predict that Edwards's career will long continue to be of prominent importance to both transatlantic as well as intra-continental American history. His embeddedness in the intersection of many pivotal transitions is certainly at the heart of why, as M.X. Lesser has put it, he 'continues to be the object of an

almost relentless pursuit ... elusive as ever, even as the net widens.¹⁰⁸ Edwards's views on the relationship between justification and sanctification are obviously central to the transition in American religious thought from seventeenth-century Puritanism to later developments in the 'evangelical tradition' that increasingly dominates the landscape of many contemporary Christian denominations. It would be hard to overstate Edwards's important place in understanding why, as Marsden puts it, 'evangelical Christianity flourished in America [sic] and why its revivalist style became one of America's leading exports.'¹⁰⁹ In addition to being a theologically relevant concept, 'virtue' is deeply embedded in social practices, class mores, cultural boundaries, and political institutions. Whether Edwards's concept thereof allowed great fluctuation of actual moral goodness underneath an umbrella term of justification by faith or whether its meaning was synonymous with precise formulations of highly self-sacrificial moral action matters a great deal for how one characterizes the transition from colony to province, and province to nation.¹¹⁰ Whether they read him rightly or wrongly, the participation of some Edwardsdeans in the debate over slavery—'benevolence' was a key term in this debate—invites consideration of what were the social influences of Edwards's ideas about how virtuous saints and/or church members were supposed to be.¹¹¹ Edwards's engagement with the concepts of 'sensibility' and 'benevolence,' his invocation of a moral sense, and his application of aesthetic symmetry to moral approbation and disapprobation make him an important figure in assessing the interaction of broad streams of religious and moral philosophy with cultural ideals of moral behavior. In so far as the emergence of nation-states and the augmentation of political rights are closely bound up with this intellectual tradition, Edwardsean virtue is a major contributor to an important chapter in the socio-political history of the Enlightenment. Colonialism is one aspect of this history and Gerald McDer-

¹⁰⁸ M.X. Lesser, *Jonathan Edwards: An Annotated Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1994), xiii.

¹⁰⁹ George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 9.

¹¹⁰ On the former transition see, e.g., Ned C. Landsman, *From Colonials to Provincials: American Thought and Culture, 1680–1760* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997). On Edwards's place in the latter see, e.g., Avihu Zakai, *Jonathan Edwards's Philosophy of History: The Reenchantment of the World in the Age of Enlightenment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), 325–335.

¹¹¹ See, e.g., David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770–1823* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 285–342, 523–556.

mott has significantly contributed to our understanding of Edwards's place therein by bringing to light his many unpublished writings on the Native Americans with which he interacted as missionary and the practitioners of world religions he, along with other prominent eighteenth-century philosophes, imagined from travel accounts.¹¹²

Closer to my own interests would be the possibility of fitting of Edwards to greater philosophical employment than his embeddedness within predestinarian and evangelical Reformed thought currently affords him.¹¹³ To enter into Edwards's corpus is to enter into a conceptual world encompassing enough familiar touchstones that the alien vistas can meaningfully challenge us with their otherness. Greater sensitivity to the baseline differences between 'ancient' and 'modern' ethical theories can help virtue ethicists, for instance, extrapolate the habituation motif set forth by Aristotle without surrendering what a virtue approach to ethics can offer modern ethical theories in its difference.¹¹⁴ Caution must be exercised, to be sure. Bringing Edwards to bear on the revival of classical conceptions of virtue accentuates Julia Annas's wise counsel to avoid too quickly, too easily, or too generally 'approaching ancient ethics from the primarily therapeutic viewpoint of remedying what are seen as our own deficiencies.'¹¹⁵ But though the results are

¹¹² Gerald R. McDermott, *Jonathan Edwards Confronts the Gods: Christian Theology, Enlightenment Religion, and Non-Christian Faiths*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

¹¹³ Edwards's relevance for contemporary religious ethics was the theme of a recent focus edition of the *Journal of Religious Ethics*. See Stephen A. Wilson and Jean Porter, 'Focus Introduction: Taking the Measure of Jonathan Edwards for Contemporary Religious Ethics,' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31.2 (Summer 2003): 183–199; Stephen A. Wilson 'Jonathan Edwards's Virtue: Diverse Sources, Multiple Meanings, and the Lessons of History for Ethics' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31.2 (Summer 2003): 201–228; Gerald R. McDermott, 'Poverty, Patriotism and National Covenant: Jonathan Edwards and Public Life,' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31.2 (Summer 2003): 229–251; William C. Spohn, 'Spirituality and Its Discontents: Practices in Jonathan Edwards's *Charity and Its Fruits*,' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31.2 (Summer 2003): 253–276; Roland A. Delattre, 'Aesthetics and Ethics: Jonathan Edwards and the Recovery of Aesthetics for Religious Ethics,' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31.2 (Summer 2003): 277–297; and Philip L. Quinn, 'Honoring Jonathan Edwards,' *Journal of Religious Ethics* 31.2 (Summer 2003): 299–321.

¹¹⁴ It is certainly the case that for certain Christian philosophers 'the idea of "non-determinist" or "contra-causal" free will is required by significant "life-hopes and theistic belief"' (Robert Kane, 'Debating Free Will,' *Times Literary Supplement* [August 30, 1991], 23). But any further defense of virtue ethics to those classic views that espouse strong conceptions of moral luck must await subsequent opportunities for development. For a more optimistic view of the ecumenism possible within a Christian virtue ethic, see Joseph J. Kotva, Jr., *The Christian Case for Virtue Ethics* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 59–61.

¹¹⁵ Julia Annas, *The Morality of Happiness* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 5.

far from parsimonious, with Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, I do not believe that rapprochements between classical Christian, classical Greek, and modern liberal accounts of virtue are ‘impossible or irrelevant.’¹¹⁶ Much further work needs to be forthcoming on the precise functionality of Edwards’s philosophy of virtue within a broader theological framework. And I agree with Philip Quinn that whether or not the philosophical insights that lie embedded within his theology would compete well for the allegiance of virtue ethicists and others in the marketplace of ideas is a separate question.¹¹⁷ But even if Edwards fails to convince secular liberals on purely philosophical grounds, his intellectual sophistication and the cultural importance of the Christian tradition he represents recommend him as a conversation partner in the twenty-first century search, well documented by Jeffrey Stout, for that elusive public space where religious ideas can be a foundation for individual political belief without threatening the participatory openness and representational inclusiveness essential for truly democratic discourse. Because such a model, Stout claims, ‘... does not predict increasingly generalized disenchantment, it does not break down in the face of facts to the contrary—such as the religious revivals of the last four decades.’¹¹⁸ To the extent that such a model will prove practically successful it will have to consult an array of religious thinkers as diverse as the public sphere itself. Whether or to what extent they are religiously ‘liberal,’ most helpful will be those who, like the Edwards I have tried to draw out, have a highly developed conceptual apparatus for talking about the way that the spiritual interacts with the natural and intersects with the moral.¹¹⁹ Edwards may or may not have been,

¹¹⁶ Stanley Hauerwas and Charles Pinches, *Christians Among the Virtues: Theological Conversations With Ancient and Modern Ethics* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1997), x.

¹¹⁷ Philip L. Quinn, ‘The Master Argument of The Nature of True Virtue,’ in *Jonathan Edwards: Philosophical Theologian*, ed. Paul Helm and Oliver D. Crisp (Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2003), 95.

¹¹⁸ Stout, *Democracy and Tradition* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 175.

¹¹⁹ There is much to admire in Marsden’s aim to interconnect Edwards’s unfolding career with ‘the tensions between religious exclusivism and pluralism are among the leading unresolved issues shaping the twenty-first-century world’ (*Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 8) even if Marsden ultimately focuses more attention on Edwards’s exclusivism than the potential of his ideas to dovetail with various sorts of pluralism (see Stephen A. Wilson, ‘A Question of Balance: Evangelical Revivalism, Calvinist Theology, and Enlightenment Philosophy in George M. Marsden’s *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*,’ *Connecticut History*, 44 [Spring 2005]: 158–162).

as Peter Gay once observed, tragically set on 'rescuing the essence of the Puritan faith' for 'an age that did not wish to listen.'¹²⁰ But it would indeed be a tragedy if not only the philosophical insights but also the historical insights yielded by his conception of virtue were 'buried,' since if I am right about the manner in which assumptions about his Calvinism have dulled its edges, it would not be, to adapt an expression of Herbert Schneider's, 'under the ruins of *his* religion' but someone else's.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Peter Gay, 'An American Tragedy,' in *Jonathan Edwards: A Profile*, ed. D. Levin (New York: Hill & Wang, 1969), 244.

¹²¹ Herbert W. Schneider, *The Puritan Mind* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1930), 155; emphasis mine.

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